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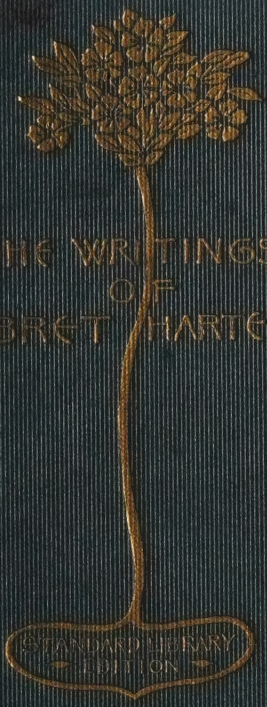

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THE WRITINGS OF

BRET HARTE

WITH INTRODUCTIONS, GLOSSARY, AND INDEXES

ILLUSTRATED BY PHOTOGRAVURES

VOLUME II

The Writings of Bret Harte

STANDARD LIBRARY EDITION

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

TALES OF THE ARGONAUTS

BY

BRET HARTE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

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INTRODUCTION[1]

As so much of my writing has dealt with the Argonauts of '49, I propose, by way of introduction, to discourse briefly on an episode of American life as quaint and typical as that of the Greek adventurers whose name I have borrowed. It is a crusade without a cross, an exodus without a prophet. It is not a pretty story; I do not know that it is even instructive. It is of a life of which, perhaps, the best that can be said is that it exists no longer.

Let me first give an idea of the country which these people re-created, and the civilization they displaced. For more than three hundred years California was of all Christian countries the least known. The glow and glamour of Spanish tradition and discovery hung about it. There was an English map in which it was set down as an island. There was the Rio de Los Reyes — a kind of gorgeous Mississippi — leading directly to the heart of the Continent, which De Fonte claimed to have discovered. There was the Anian passage — a prophetic forecast of the Pacific Railroad — through which Maldonado declared that he sailed to the North Atlantic. Another Spanish discoverer brought his mendacious personality directly from the Pacific, by way of Columbia River, to Lake Ontario; on which, I am rejoiced to say, he found a Yankee vessel from Boston, whose captain informed him that *he* had come up from the Atlantic only a few days before him! Along the long line of iron-bound coast the old freebooters chased the

[1] This Introduction, in its original use, was a lecture to English and American audiences.

timid Philippine galleons, and in its largest bay, beside the present gateway of the West, — San Francisco, — Sir Francis Drake lay for two weeks and scraped the barnacles from his adventurous keels. It is only within the past twenty-five years, that a company of gold-diggers, turning up the ocean sands near Port Umpqua, came upon some large cakes of wax deeply imbedded in the broken and fire-scarred ribs of a wreck of ancient date. The Californian heart was at once fired at the discovery, and in a few weeks a hundred men or more were digging, burrowing, and scraping for the lost treasure of the Philippine galleon. At last they found — what think you? — a few cutlasses with an English stamp upon their blades. The enterprising and gallant — and slightly piratical — Sir Francis Drake had been there before them!

Yet they were peaceful, pastoral days for California. Through the great central valley the Sacramento poured an unstained current into a majestic bay, ruffled by no keels and fretted by no wharves. The Angelus bell rung at San Bernardino, and, taken up by every Mission tower along the darkening coast, called the good people to prayer and sleep before nine o'clock every night. Leagües of wild oats, progenitors of those great wheat fields that now drug the markets, hung their idle heads on the hillsides; vast herds of untamed cattle, whose hides and horns alone made the scant commerce of those days, wandered over the illimitable plains, knowing no human figure but that of the yearly riding vaquero on his unbroken mustang, which they regarded as the early aborigines did the Spanish cavalry, as one individual creation. Around the white walls of the Mission buildings were clustered the huts of the Indian neophytes, who dressed neatly, but not expensively, in mud. Presidios garrisoned by a dozen raw militiamen kept the secular order, and in the scattered pueblos rustic alcaldes dispensed, like Sancho Panza, pro-

verbial wisdom and practical equity to the bucolic litigants. In looking over some Spanish law papers, one day, I came upon a remarkable instance of the sagacity of Alcalde Felipe Gomez of Santa Barbara. An injured wife accused her husband of serenading the wife of another. The faithless husband and his too seductive guitar were both produced in court. "Play," said the alcalde to the gay Lothario. The unfortunate man was obliged to repeat his amorous performance of the preceding night. "I find nothing here," said the excellent alcalde after a moment's pause, "but an infamous voice and an execrable style. I dismiss the complaint of the Señora, but I shall hold the Señor on the charge of vilely disturbing the peace of Santa Barbara."

They were happy, tranquil days. The proprietors of the old ranchos ruled in a patriarchal style, and lived to a patriarchal age. On a soil half tropical in its character, in a climate wholly original in its practical conditions, a soft-handed Latin race slept and smoked the half year's sunshine away, and believed that they had discovered a new Spain! They awoke from their dream only to find themselves strangers on their own soil, foreigners in their own country, ignorant even of the treasure they had been sent to guard. A political and social earthquake, more powerful than any physical convulsions they had ever known, shook the foundation of the land, and in the disrupted strata and rent fissures the treasure suddenly glittered before their eyes.

Though the change came upon them suddenly, it had been prefigured by a chain of circumstances whose logical links future historians will not overlook. It was not the finding of a few grains of gold by a day laborer at Sutter's Mill, but that for years before the way had been slowly opened and the doors unlocked to the people who were to profit by this discovery. The real pioneers of the lawless, irreligious band whose story I am repeating were the oldest

and youngest religions known. Do Americans ever think that they owe their right to California to the Catholic Church and the Mormon brotherhood? Yet Father Junipero Serra ringing his bell in the heathen wilderness of Upper California, and Brigham Young leading his half famished legions from Nauvoo to Salt Lake, were the two great commanders of the Argonauts of '49. All that western emigration which, prior to the gold discovery, penetrated the Oregon and California valleys and half Americanized the Coast, would have perished by the way, but for the providentially created oasis of Salt Lake City. The halting trains of alkali-poisoned oxen, the footsore and despairing teamsters, gathered rest and succor from the Mormon settlement. The British frigate that sailed into the port of Monterey a day or two late, saw the American flag that had, under this providence, crossed the continent, flying from the Cross of the Cathedral! A day sooner, and this story might have been an English record.

Were our friends, the Argonauts, at all affected by these coincidences? I think not. They had that lordly contempt for a southern, soft-tongued race which belonged to their Anglo-Saxon lineage. They were given to no superstitious romance, exalted by no special mission, stimulated by no high ambition; they were skeptical of even the existence of the golden fleece until they saw it. Equal to their fate, they accepted with a kind of heathen philosophy whatever it might bring. "If there is n't any gold, what are you going to do with these sluice-boxes?" said a newly arrived emigrant to his friend. "They will make first-class coffins," answered the friend, with the simple directness of a man who has calculated all his chances. If they did not burn their vessels behind them, like Pizarro, they at least left the good ship Argo dismantled and rotting at their Colchian wharf. Sailors were shipped only for the outward voyage; nobody expected to *return*, even

those who anticipated failure. Fertile in expedients, they twisted their failures into a certain sort of success. Until recently, there stood in San Francisco a house of the early days whose foundations were built entirely of plug tobacco in boxes. The consignee had found a glut in the tobacco market, but lumber for foundations was at a tremendous premium! An Argonaut just arriving was amazed at recognizing in the boatman who pulled him ashore, and who charged him the modest sum of fifty dollars for the performance, a brother classmate of Cambridge. "Were you not," he asked eagerly, "senior wrangler in '43?" "Yes," said the other significantly, "but I also pulled stroke oar against Oxford." If the special training of years sometimes failed to procure pecuniary recognition, an idle accomplishment, sometimes even a physical peculiarity, succeeded. At my first breakfast in a restaurant on Long Wharf, I was haunted during the meal by a shadowy resemblance which the waiter who took my order bore to a gentleman to whom in my boyhood I had looked up as a mirror of elegance, urbanity, and social accomplishment. Fearful lest I should insult the waiter — who carried a revolver — by this reminiscence, I said nothing to him; but a later inquiry of the proprietor proved that my suspicions were correct. "He 's mighty handy," said the man, "and kin talk elegant to a customer as is waiting for his cakes, and make him kinder forget he ain't sarved." With an earnest desire to restore my old friend to his former position, I asked if it would not be possible to fill his place. "I 'm afraid not," said the proprietor with a sudden suspicion, and he added significantly, "I don't think you 'd suit." It was this wonderful adaptability, perhaps influenced by a climate that produced fruit out of season, that helped the Argonauts to success, or mitigated their defeats. A now distinguished lawyer, remarkable for his Herculean build, found himself on landing without a cent — rather let me

say without twenty dollars — to pay the porterage of his trunk to the hotel. Shouldering it, he was staggering from the landing, when a stranger stepped towards him, remarking he had not "half a load," quietly added his own valise to the lawyer's burden, and handing him ten dollars and his address, departed before the legal gentleman could recover from his astonishment. The valise, however, was punctually delivered, and the lawyer often congratulated himself on the comparative ease with which he won his first fee.

Much of the easy adaptability was due to the character of the people. What that character was, perhaps it would not be well to say. At least I should prefer to defer criticism until I could add to the calmness the safe distance of the historian. You will find some of their peculiarities described in the frank autobiographies of those two gentlemen who executed a little commission for Macbeth in which Banquo was concerned. In distant parts of the continent they had left families, creditors, and in some instances even officers of justice, perplexed and lamenting. There were husbands who had deserted their own wives, — and in some extreme cases even the wives of others, — for this haven of refuge. Nor was it possible to tell from their superficial exterior, or even their daily walk and action, whether they were or were not named in the counts of this general indictment. Some of the best men had the worst antecedents, some of the worst rejoiced in a spotless puritan pedigree. "The boys seem to have taken a fresh deal all round," said Mr. John Oakhurst one day to me, with the easy confidence of a man who was conscious of his ability to win my money, "and there is no knowing whether a man will turn up knave or king." It is relevant to this anecdote that Mr. John Oakhurst himself came of a family whose ancestors regarded games of chance as sinful, because they were trifling and amusing, but who

had never conceived they might be made the instruments of successful speculation and even tragic earnestness. "To think," said Mr. Oakhurst, as he rose from a ten minutes' sitting with a gain of five thousand dollars, — "to think there 's folks as believes that keerds is a waste of time."

Such were the character and the antecedents of the men who gave the dominant and picturesque coloring to the life of that period. Doubtless the papers of the ancient Argo showed a cleaner bill of moral health, but doubtless no type of adventure more distinct or original. I would not have it inferred that there was not a class, respectable in numbers as in morals, among and yet distinct from these. But they have no place here save as a background to the salient outlines and deeply etched figures of the Argonauts. Character ruled, and the strongest was not always the best. Let me bring them a little nearer. Let me sketch two pictures of them: one in their gathered concourse in their city by the sea, one in their lonely scattered cabins in the camps of the Sierras.

It is the memorable winter of '52, a typical Californian winter — unlike anything known to most of my readers; a winter from whose snowy nest in the Sierras the fluttering, new-fledged Spring freed itself without a struggle. It is a season of falling rains and springing grasses, of long nights of shower, and days of cloud and sunshine. There are hours when the quickening earth seems to throb beneath one's feet, and the blue eyes of heaven to twinkle through its misty lashes. High up in the Sierras, unsunned depths of snow form the vast reservoirs that later will flood the plains, causing the homesick wanderers on the lowlands to look with awe upon a broad expanse of overflow, a lake that might have buried the State of Massachusetts in its yellow depths. The hillsides are gay with flowers, and, as in the old fairy story, every utterance of the kindly Spring falls from her lips to the ground in rubies and

emeralds. And yet it is called "a hard season," and flour is fifty dollars a barrel. In San Francisco it has been raining steadily for two weeks. The streets are almost impassable with mud, and over some of the more dangerous depths planks are thrown. There are few street lamps, but the shops are still lighted, and the streets are full of long-bearded, long-booted men, eager for some new excitement, their only idea of recreation from the feverish struggle of the day. Perhaps it is a passing carriage — a phenomenal carriage, one of the half dozen known in the city — that becoming helplessly mired is instantly surrounded by a score of willing hands whose owners are only too happy to be rewarded by a glimpse of a female face through the window, even though that face be haggard, painted, or gratuitously plain. Perhaps it is in the little theatre, where the cry of a baby in the audience brings down a tumultuous encore from the whole house. Perhaps it is in the gilded drinking saloon, into which some one rushes with arms extended at right angles, and conveys in that one pantomimic action the signal of the semaphore telegraph on Telegraph Hill that a sidewheel steamer has arrived, and that there are "letters from home." Perhaps it is the long queue that afterwards winds and stretches from the Post Office half a mile away. Perhaps it is the eager men who, following it rapidly down, bid fifty, a hundred, two hundred, three hundred, and five hundred dollars for favored places in the line. Perhaps it is the haggard man who nervously tears open his letter and after a moment's breathless pause faints and falls senseless beside his comrades. Or perhaps it is a row and a shot in the streets, but in '52 this was hardly an excitement.

The gambling-saloon is always the central point of interest. There are four of them, — the largest public buildings in the city, — thronged and crowded all night. They are

approached by no mysterious passage or guarded entrance, but are frankly open to the street, with the further invitation of gilding, lights, warmth, and music. Strange to say, there is a quaint decorum about them. They are the quietest halls in San Francisco. There is no drunkenness, no quarreling, scarcely any exultation or disappointment. Men who have already staked their health and fortune in this emigration are but little affected by the lesser stake on red or black, or the turn of a card. Business men who have gambled all day in their legitimate enterprise find nothing to excite them unduly here. In the intervals of music, a thoughtful calm pervades the vast assembly ; people move around noiselessly from table to table, as if Fortune were nervous as well as fickle; a cane falling upon the floor causes every one to look up, a loud laugh or exclamation excites a stare of virtuous indignation. The most respectable citizens, though they might not play, are to be seen here of an evening. Old friends, who perhaps parted at the church door in the States, meet here without fear and without reproach. Even among the players are represented all classes and conditions of men. One night at a faro table a player suddenly slipped from his seat to the floor, a dead man. Three doctors, also players, after a brief examination, pronounced it disease of the heart. The coroner, sitting at the right of the dealer, instantly impaneled the rest of the players, who, laying down their cards, briefly gave a verdict in accordance with the facts, and went on with their game!

I do not mean to say that, under this surface calm, there was not often the intensest feeling. There was a Western man, who, having made a few thousands in the mines, came to San Francisco to take the Eastern steamer home. The night before he was to sail, he entered the Arcade saloon, and seating himself at a table in sheer listlessness, staked a twenty-dollar gold piece on the game.

He won. He won again without removing his stake. It was, in short, that old story told so often — how in two hours he won a fortune, how an hour later he rose from the table a ruined man. Well — the steamer sailed without him. He was a simple man, knowing little of the world, and his sudden fortune and equally sudden reverse almost crazed him. He dared not write to the wife who awaited him; he had not pluck enough to return to the mines and build his fortune up anew. A fatal fascination held him to the spot. He took some humble occupation in the city, and regularly lost his scant earnings where his wealth had gone before. His ragged figure and haggard face appeared as regularly as the dealer at the table. So, a year passed. But if he had forgotten the waiting wife, she had not forgotten him. With infinite toil she at last procured a passage to San Francisco, and was landed with her child penniless upon its wharf. In her sore extremity she told her story to a passing stranger — the last man, perhaps, to have met — Mr. John Oakhurst, a gambler! He took her to a hotel, and quietly provided for her immediate wants. Two or three evenings after this, the Western man, still playing at the same table, won some trifling stake three times in succession, as if Fortune were about to revisit him. At this moment, Mr. Oakhurst clapped him on the shoulder. "I will give you," he said, quietly, "three thousand dollars for your next play." The man hesitated. "Your wife is at the door," continued Mr. Oakhurst *sotto voce*. "Will you take it? Quick!" The man accepted. But the spirit of the gambler was strong within him, and as Mr. Oakhurst perhaps fully expected, he waited to see the result of the play. Mr. Oakhurst lost! With a look of gratitude the man turned to Oakhurst and seizing the three thousand dollars hurried away, as if fearful he might change his mind. "That was a bad spurt of yours, Jack," said a friend innocently, not

observing the smile that had passed between the dealer and Jack. "Yes," said Jack coolly, "but I got tired of seein' that chap around." "But," said his friend in alarm, "you don't mean to say that you" — and he hesitated. "I mean to say, my dear boy," said Jack, "that this yer little deal was a put-up job betwixt the dealer and me. It 's the first time," he added seriously, with an oath which I think the recording angel instantly passed to Jack's credit, "it 's the first time as I ever played a game that was n't *on the square.*"

The social life of that day was peculiar. Gentlemen made New Year's calls in long boots and red flannel shirts. In later days the wife of an old pioneer used to show a chair with a hole through its cushion made by a gentleman caller who, sitting down suddenly in bashful confusion, had exploded his revolver. The best-dressed men were gamblers; the best-dressed ladies had no right to that title. At balls and parties dancing was tabooed, owing to the unhappy complications which arose from the disproportionate number of partners to the few ladies that were present. The ingenious device of going through a quadrille with a different partner for each figure sprang from the fertile brain of a sorely beset San Francisco belle. The wife of an army officer told me that she never thought of returning home with the same escort, and not unfrequently was accompanied with what she called a "full platoon." "I never knew before," she said, "what they meant by 'the pleasure of *your company.*'" In the multiplicity of such attentions surely there was safety.

Such was the urban life of the Argonauts — its salient peculiarities softened and subdued by the constant accession of strangers from the East and the departure of its own citizens for the interior. As each succeeding ocean steamer brought fresh faces from the East, a corresponding change took place in the type and in the manners and morals.

When fine clothes appeared upon the streets and men swore less frequently, people began to put locks on their doors and portable property was no longer out at night. As fine houses were built, real estate rose, and the dwellers in the old tents were pushed from the contiguity of their richer brothers. San Francisco saw herself naked, and was ashamed. The old Argonautic brotherhood, with its fierce sincerity, its terrible directness, its pathetic simplicity, was broken up. Some of the members were content to remain in a Circean palace of material and sensuous delight, but the type was transferred to the mountains, and thither I propose to lead you.

It is a country unlike any other. Nature here is as rude, as inchoate, as unfinished, as the life. The people seem to have come here a thousand years too soon, and before the great hostess was ready to receive them. The forests, vast, silent, damp with their undergrowth of gigantic ferns, recall a remote carboniferous epoch. The trees are monstrous, sombre, and monotonously alike. Everything is new, crude, and strange. The grass blades are enormous and far apart, there is no carpet to the soil; even the few Alpine flowers are odorless and bizarre. There is nothing soft, tender, or pastoral in the landscape. Nature affects the heroics rather than the bucolics. Theocritus himself could scarcely have given melody to the utterance of these Ætnean herdsmen, with their brierwood pipes, and their revolvers slung at their backs. There are vast spaces of rock and cliff, long intervals of ravine and cañon, and sudden and awful lapses of precipice. The lights and shadows are Rembrandtish, and against this background the faintest outline of a human figure stands out starkly.

They lived at first in tents, and then in cabins. The climate was gracious, and except for the rudest purposes of shelter from the winter rains, they could have slept out of doors the year round, as many preferred to do. As they

grew more ambitious, perhaps a small plot of ground was inclosed and cultivated; but for the first few years they looked upon themselves as tenants at will, and were afraid of putting down anything they could not take away. Chimneys to their cabins were for a long time avoided as having this objectionable feature. Even at this day, deserted mining-camps are marked by the solitary adobe chimneys still left standing where the frame of the original cabin was moved to some newer location. Their housekeeping was of the rudest kind. For many months the frying-pan formed their only available cooking-utensil. It was lashed to the wandering miner's back, like the troubadour's guitar. He fried his bread, his beans, his bacon, and occasionally stewed his coffee, in this single vessel. But that Nature worked for him with a balsamic air and breezy tonics, he would have succumbed. Happily his meals were few and infrequent; happily the inventions of his mother East were equal to his needs. His progressive track through these mountain solitudes was marked with tin cans bearing the inscriptions: "Cove Oysters," "Shaker Sweet Corn," "Yeast Powder," "Boston Crackers," and the like. But in the hour of adversity and the moment of perplexity, his main reliance was beans! It was the sole legacy of the Spanish California. The conqueror and the conquered fraternized over their *frijoles*.

The Argonaut's dress was peculiar. He was ready if not skillful with his needle, and was fond of patching his clothes until the original material disappeared beneath a cloud of amendments. The flour-sack was his main dependence. When its contents had sustained and comforted the inner man, the husk clothed the outer one. Two gentlemen of respectability in earlier days lost their identity in the labels somewhat conspicuously borne on the seats of their trousers, and were known to the camp in all seriousness as "Genesee Mills" and "Eagle Brand." In

the Southern mines a quantity of seamen's clothing, condemned by the Navy Department and sold at auction, was bought up, and for a year afterwards the sombre woodland shades of Stanislaus and Merced were lightened by the white ducks and blue and white shirts of sailor landsmen. It was odd that the only picturesque bit of color in their dress was accidental, and owing to a careless, lazy custom. Their handkerchiefs of coarse blue, green, or yellow bandanna were for greater convenience in hot weather knotted at the ends and thrown shawlwise around the shoulders. Against a background of olive foliage, the effect was always striking and kaleidoscopic. The soft felt, broad-brimmed hat, since known as the California hat, was their only head-covering. A tall hat on anybody but a clergyman or a gambler would have justified a blow.

They were singularly handsome, to a man. Not solely in the muscular development and antique grace acquired through open-air exercise and unrestrained freedom of limb, but often in color, expression, and even softness of outline. They were mainly young men, whose beards were virgin, soft, silken, and curling. They had not always time to cut their hair, and this often swept their shoulders with the lovelocks of Charles II. There were faces that made one think of Delaroche's Saviour. There were dashing figures, bold-eyed, jauntily insolent, and cavalierly reckless, that would have delighted Meissonier. Add to this the foreign element of Chilian and Mexican, and you have a combination of form and light and color unknown to any other modern English-speaking community. At sunset on the red mountain road, a Mexican pack-train perhaps slowly winds its way toward the plain. Each animal wears a gayly colored blanket beneath its pack saddle; the leading mule is musical with bells, and brightly caparisoned; the muleteers wear the national dress, with striped *serape* of red and black, deerskin trousers open

from the knee, and fringes with bullion buttons, and have on each heel a silver spur with rowels three inches in diameter. If they were thus picturesque in external magnificence, no less romantic were they in expression and character. Their hospitality was barbaric, their generosity spontaneous. Their appreciation of merit always took the form of pecuniary testimonials, whether it was a church and parsonage given to a favorite preacher, or the Danaë-like shower of gold they rained upon the pretty person of a popular actress. No mendicant had to beg; a sympathizing bystander took up a subscription in his hat. Their generosity was emulative and cumulative. During the great War of the Rebellion, the millions gathered in the Treasury of the Sanitary Commission had their source in a San Francisco bar-room. "It 's mighty rough on those chaps who are wounded," said a casual drinker, "and I 'm sorry for them." "How much are you sorry?" asked a gambler. "Five hundred dollars," said the first speaker aggressively. "I 'll see that five hundred dollars, and go a thousand better!" said the gambler, putting down the money. In half an hour fifteen thousand dollars was telegraphed to Washington from San Francisco, and this great national charity — open to North and South alike, afterwards reinforced by three millions of California gold — sprang into life.

In their apparently thoughtless free-handedness there was often a vein of practical sagacity. It is a well-known fact that after the great fire in Sacramento, the first subscription to the rebuilding of the Methodist Church came from the hands of a noted gambler. The good pastor, while accepting the gift, could not help asking the giver why he did not keep the money to build another gambling-house. "It would be making things a little *monotonous* out yer, ole man," responded the gambler gravely, "and it 's variety that 's wanted for a big town."

They were splendidly loyal in their friendships. Perhaps the absence of female society and domestic ties turned the current of their tenderness and sentiment towards each other. To be a man's "partner" signified something more than a common pecuniary or business interest; it was to be his friend through good or ill report, in adversity or fortune, to cleave to him and none other — to be ever jealous of him! There were Argonauts who were more faithful to their partners than, I fear, they had ever been to their wives; there were partners whom even the grave could not divide — who remained solitary and loyal to a dead man's memory. To insult a man's partner was to insult him; to step between two partners in a quarrel was attended with the same danger and uncertainty that involves the peacemaker in a conjugal dispute. The heroic possibilities of a Damon and a Pythias were always present; there were men who had fulfilled all those conditions, and better still without a knowledge or belief that they were classical, with no mythology to lean their backs against, and hardly a conscious appreciation of a later faith that is symbolized by sacrifice. In these unions there were the same odd combinations often seen in the marital relations: a tall and a short man, a delicate sickly youth and a middle-aged man of powerful frame, a grave reticent nature and a spontaneous exuberant one. Yet in spite of these incongruities there was always the same blind unreasoning fidelity to each other. It is true that their zeal sometimes outran their discretion. There is a story extant that a San Francisco stranger, indulging in some free criticism of religious denominations, suddenly found himself sprawling upon the floor with an irate Kentuckian, revolver in hand, standing over him. When an explanation was demanded by the crowd, the Kentuckian pensively returned his revolver to his belt. "Well, *I* ain't got anythin' agin the stranger, but he said somethin' a minit ago agin Quakers,

and I want him to understand that my *pardner* is a Quaker, and — a *peaceful man!*"

I should like to give some pictures of their domestic life, but the women were few and the family hearthstones and domestic altars still fewer. Of housewifely virtues the utmost was made; the model spouse invariably kept a boarding-house, and served her husband's guests. In rare cases, the woman who was a crown to her husband took in washing also.

There was a woman of this class who lived in a little mining-camp in the Sierras. Her husband was a Texan — a good-humored giant, who had won the respect of the camp probably quite as much by his amiable weakness as by his great physical power. She was an Eastern woman; had been, I think, a schoolmistress, and had lived in cities up to the time of her marriage and emigration. She was not, perhaps, personally attractive; she was plain and worn beyond her years, and her few personal accomplishments — a slight knowledge of French and Italian, music, the Latin classification of plants, natural philosophy and Blair's Rhetoric — did not tell upon the masculine inhabitants of Ringtail Cañon. Yet she was universally loved, and Aunt Ruth, as she was called, or "Old Ma'am Richards," was lifted into an idealization of the aunt, mother, or sister of every miner in the camp. She reciprocated in a thousand kindly ways, mending the clothes, ministering to the sick, and even answering the long home letters of the men.

Presently she fell ill. Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with her, but she pined slowly away. When the burthen of her household tasks was lifted from her shoulders, she took to long walks, wandering over the hills, and was often seen upon the highest ridge at sunset, looking toward the east. Here at last she was found senseless, — the result, it was said, of over exertion, and she

was warned to keep her house. So she kept her house, and even went so far as to keep her bed. One day, to everybody's astonishment, she died. "Do you know what they say Ma'am Richards died of?" said Yuba Bill to his partner. "The doctor says she died of *nostalgia*," said Bill. "What blank thing is nostalgia?" asked the other. "Well, it 's a kind o' longin' to go to heaven!" Perhaps he was right.

As a general thing the Argonauts were not burthened with sentiment, and were utterly free from its more dangerous ally, sentimentalism. They took a sardonic delight in stripping all meretricious finery from their speech; they had a sarcastic fashion of eliminating everything but the facts from poetic or imaginative narrative. With all that terrible directness of statement which was habitual to them, when they indulged in innuendo it was significantly cruel and striking. In the early days, Lynch law punished horse-stealing with death. A man one day was arrested and tried for this offense. After hearing the evidence, the jury duly retired to consult upon their verdict. For some reason — perhaps from an insufficiency of proof, perhaps from motives of humanity, perhaps because the census was already showing an alarming decrease in the male population — the jury showed signs of hesitation. The crowd outside became impatient. After waiting an hour, the ringleader put his head into the room and asked if the jury had settled upon a verdict. "No," said the foreman. "Well," answered the leader, "take your own time, gentlemen; only remember that we 're waitin' for this yer room to lay out the corpse in!"

Their humor was frequent, although never exuberant or spontaneous, and always contained a certain percentage of rude justice or morality under its sardonic exterior. The only ethical teaching of those days was through a joke or a sarcasm. While camps were moved by an epigram, the

rude equity of Judge Lynch was swayed by a witticism. Even their pathos, which was more or less dramatic, partook of this quality. The odd expression, the quaint fancy, or even the grotesque gesture that rippled the surface consciousness with a smile, a moment later touched the depths of the heart with a sense of infinite sadness. They indulged sparingly in poetry and illustration, using only its rude, inchoate form of slang. Unlike the meaningless cues and catch-words of an older civilization, their slang was the condensed epigrammatic illustration of some fact, fancy, or perception. Generally it had some significant local derivation. The half-yearly drought brought forward the popular adjuration "dry up" to express the natural climax of evaporated fluency. "Played out" was a reminiscence of the gambling-table, and expressed that hopeless condition of affairs when even the operations of chance are suspended. To "take stock" in any statement, theory, or suggestion indicates a pecuniary degree of trustful credulity. One can hardly call that slang, even though it came from a gambler's lips, which gives such a vivid condensation of death and the reckoning hereafter as was conveyed in the expression, "handing in your checks." In those days the slang was universal; there was no occasion to which it seemed inconsistent. Thomas Starr King once told me that, after delivering a certain controversial sermon, he overheard the following dialogue between a parishioner and his friend. "Well," said the enthusiastic parishioner, referring to the sermon, "what do you think of King now?" "Think of him?" responded the friend, "why, he took every trick!"

Sometimes, through the national habit of amusing exaggeration or equally grotesque understatement, certain words acquired a new significance. I remember the first night I spent in Virginia City was at a new hotel which had been but recently opened. After I had got comfortably

to bed, I was aroused by the noise of scuffling and shouting below, punctuated by occasional pistol shots. In the morning I made my way to the bar-room, and found the landlord behind his counter with a bruised eye, a piece of court plaster extending from his cheek to his forehead, yet withal a pleasant smile upon his face. Taking my cue from this I said to him: "Well, landlord, you had rather a lively time here last night." "Yes," he replied, pleasantly. "It *was* rather a lively time!" "Do you often have such lively times in Virginia City?" I added, emboldened by his cheerfulness. "Well, no," he said, reflectively; "the fact is we 've only just opened yer, and last night was about the first time that the boys seemed to be gettin' really *acquainted!*"

The man who objected to join in a bear hunt because "he had n't lost any bears lately," and the man who replied to the tourist's question "if they grew any corn in that locality" by saying "not a d—d bit, in fact scarcely any," offered easy examples of this characteristic anti-climax and exaggeration. Often a flavor of gentle philosophy mingled with it. "In course I 'd rather not drive a mule team," said a teamster to me. "In course I 'd rather run a bank or be President: but when you 've lived as long as I have, stranger, you 'll find that in this yer world a man don't always get his 'drathers.'" Often a man's trade or occupation lent a graphic power to his speech. On one occasion an engineer was relating to me the particulars of a fellow workman's death by consumption. "Poor Jim," he said, "he got to running slower and slower, until one day — he stopped on his centre!" What a picture of the helpless hitch in this weary human machine! Sometimes the expression was borrowed from another's profession. At one time there was a difficulty in a surveyor's camp between the surveyor and a Chinaman. "If I was you," said a sympathizing teamster to the

surveyor, "I 'd jest take that chap and theodolite him out o' camp." Sometimes the slang was a mere echo of the formulas of some popular excitement or movement. During a camp-meeting in the mountains, a teamster who had been swearing at his cattle was rebuked for his impiety by a young woman who had just returned from the meeting. "Why, Miss," said the astonished teamster, "you don't call that swearing, do you? Why, you ought to hear Bill Jones exhort the impenitent mule!"

But can we entirely forgive the Argonaut for making his slang gratuitously permanent, for foisting upon posterity, who may forget these extenuating circumstances, such titles as "One Horse Gulch," "Poker Flat," "Greaser Cañon," "Fiddletown," "Murderer's Bar," "and "Dead Broke"? The map of California is still ghastly with this unhallowed christening. A tourist may well hesitate to write "Dead Broke," at the top of his letter, and any stranger would be justified in declining an invitation to "Murderer's Bar." It seemed as if the early Californian took a sardonic delight in the contrast which these names offered to the euphony of the old Spanish titles. It is fortunate that with few exceptions the counties of the State still bear the soft Castilian labials and gentle vowels. Tuolumne, Tulare, Yolo, Calaveras, Sonoma, Tehema, Siskyou, and Mendocino, to say nothing of the glorious company of the Apostles who perpetually praise California through the Spanish Catholic calendar. Yet wherever a saint dropped a blessing, some sinner afterwards squatted with an epithet. Extremes often meet. The omnibuses in San Francisco used to run from Happy Valley to the Mission Dolores. You had to go to Blaises first before you could get to Purissima. Yet I think the ferocious directness of these titles was preferable to the pinchbeck elegance of "Copperopolis," "Argentinia," the polyglot monstrosities of "Oroville," of "Placerville," or the remarkable sentiment of "Romeos-

burgh" and "Julietstown." Sometimes the national tendency to abbreviation was singularly shown. "Jamestown," near Sonora, was always known as "Jimtown," and "Moquelumne Hill," after first suffering phonetic torture by being spelt with a "k," was finally drawn and quartered and now appears on the stage-coach as "Mok Hill." There were some names that defied all conjecture. The Pioneer coaches changed horses at a place called "Paradox." Why Paradox? No one could tell.

I wish I could say that the Spaniard fared any better than his language at the hands of the Argonauts. He was called a "Greaser," an unctuous reminiscence of the Mexican war, and applied erroneously to the Spanish Californian, who was *not* a Mexican. The pure blood of Castile ran in his veins. He held his lands sometimes by royal patent of Charles V. He was grave, simple, and confiding. He accepted the Argonaut's irony as sincere, he permitted him to squat on his lands, he allowed him to marry his daughter. He found himself, in a few years, laughed at, landless, and alone. In his sore extremity he entered into a defensive alliance with some of his persecutors, and avenged himself after an extraordinary fashion. In all matters relating to early land grants he was the evergreen witness; his was the only available memory, his the only legal testimony, on the Coast. Perhaps strengthened by this repeated exercise, his memory became one of the most extraordinary, his testimony the most complete and corroborative, known to human experience. He recalled conversations, official orders, and precedents of fifty years ago as if they were matters of yesterday. He produced grants, *deseños*, signatures, and letters with promptitude and despatch. He evolved evidence from his inner consciousness, and in less than three years Spanish land titles were lost in hopeless confusion and a cloud of witnesses. The wily Argonauts cursed the aptness of their pupil.

Socially he clung to his old customs. He had his regular *fandango*, strummed his guitar, and danced the *semicuaca*. He had his regular Sunday bull-fights after Mass. But the wily Argonaut introduced "breakdowns" in the *fandango*, substituted the banjo for the guitar, and Bourbon whiskey for *aguardiente*. He even went so far as to interfere with the bull-fights, not so much from a sense of moral ethics as with a view to giving the bulls a show. On one or two occasions he substituted a grizzly bear, who not only instantly cleared the arena, but playfully wiped out the first two rows of benches beyond. He learned horsemanship from the Spaniard and — ran off his cattle.

Yet, before taking leave of the Spanish American, it is well to recall a single figure. It is that of the earliest pioneer known to Californian history. He comes to us toiling over a southern plain — an old man, weak, emaciated, friendless, and alone. He has left his weary muleteers and acolytes a league behind him, and has wandered on without scrip or wallet, bearing only a crucifix and a bell. It is a characteristic plain, one that tourists do not usually penetrate: scorched yet bleak, windswept, blasted and baked to its very foundations, and cracked into gaping chasms. As the pitiless sun goes down, the old man staggers forward and falls utterly exhausted. He lies there all night. Towards morning he is found by some Indians, a feeble, simple race, who in uncouth kindness offer him food and drink. But before he accepts either, he rises to his knees, and there says matins and baptizes them in the Catholic faith. And then it occurs to him to ask them where he is, and he finds that he has penetrated into the unknown land. This was Padre Junipero Serra, and the sun arose that morning on Christian California. Weighed by the usual estimates of success, his mission was a failure. The heathen stole his provisions and

massacred his acolytes. It is said that the good fathers themselves sometimes confounded baptism and bondage, and laid the foundation of peonage; but in the bloodstained and tear-blotted chronicle of early California, there is no more heroic figure than the thin, travel-worn, self-centred, self-denying Franciscan friar.

If I have thus far refrained from eulogizing the virtues of another characteristic figure, it is because he came later. The Heathen Chinee was *not* an Argonaut. But he brought into the Argonaut's new life an odd conservatism. Quiet, calm, almost philosophic, but never obtrusive or aggressive, he never flaunted his three thousand years in the face of the men of to-day; he never obtruded his extensive mythology before men who were skeptical of even one God. He accepted at once a menial position with dignity and self-respect. He washed for the whole community, and made cleanliness an accessible virtue. He brought patience and novelty into the kitchen; he brought silence, obedience, and a certain degree of intelligence into the whole sphere of domestic service. He stood behind your chair, quiet, attentive, but uncommunicative. He waited upon you at table with the air of the man who, knowing himself superior, could not jeopardize his position. He worshipped the devil in your household with a frank sincerity and openness that shamed your own covert and feeble attempts in that direction. Although he wore your clothes, spoke your language, and imitated your vices, he was always involved in his own Celestial atmosphere. He consorted only with his fellows, consumed his own peculiar provisions, bought his goods of the Chinese companies, and when he died, his bones were sent to China! He left no track, trace, or imprint on the civilization. He claimed no civil right; he wanted no franchise. He took his regular beatings calmly; he submitted to scandalous extortion from state and individual with

tranquillity; he bore robbery and even murder with stoical fortitude. Perhaps it was well that he did. Christian civilization, which declared by statute that his testimony was valueless; which intimated by its practice that the same vices in a pagan were worse than in a Christian; which regarded the frailty of his women as being especially abominable and his own gambling propensities as something originally bad, taught him at least the Christian virtues of patience and resignation.

Did he ever get even with the Christian Argonauts? I am inclined to think that he did. Indeed, in some instances I may say that I know that he did. He had a universal, simple way of defrauding the customs. He filled the hollows of bamboo chairs with opium, and, sitting calmly on them, conversed with dignity with custom-house officials. He made the amplitude of his sleeve and trouser useful as well as ornamental on similar occasions. He evaded the state poll tax by taking the name and assuming the exact facial expression of some brother Celestial who had already paid. He turned his skill as a horticulturist to sinful account by investing rose bushes with imitations of that flower made out of carrots and turnips. He acquired Latin and Greek with peculative rather than scholastic intent, and borrowed fifty dollars from a Californian clergyman while he soothed his ear with the Homeric accents. But perhaps his most successful attempt at balancing his account with a Christian civilization was his career as a physician.

One day he opened a doctor's office in San Francisco. By the aid of clever confederates, miraculous cures were trumpeted through the land, until people began to flock to his healing ministration. His doorways were beset by an army of invalids. Two interpreters, like the angels in the old legend, listened night and day to the ills told by the people that crowded this Hygeian temple. They

translated into the common tongue the words of wisdom that fell from the oracular lips of this slant-eyed Apollo. Doctor Lipotai was eminently successful. Presently, however, there were Chinese doctors on every corner. A sign with the proper monosyllables, a pigtail and an interpreter, were the only stock in trade required. The pagan knew that no one would stop to reason. The ignorant heathen was aware that no one would stop to consider what superior opportunities the Chinese had for medical knowledge over the practitioners of his own land. This debased old idolater knew that these intelligent Christians would think that it might be *magic*, and so would come. And they did come. And he gave them green tea for tubercular consumption, ginger for aneurism, and made them smell punk for dropsy. The treatment was harmless, but wearisome. Suddenly, a well known Oriental scholar published a list of the remedies ordinarily used in the Chinese medical practice. I regret to say that for obvious reasons I cannot repeat the unsavory list here. It was enough, however, to produce the ordinary symptoms of sea-sickness among the doctor's patients. The celestial star at once began to wane. The oracle ceased to be questioned. The sibyls got off their tripods. And Doctor Lipotai, with a half million in his pocket, returned to his native rice and the naïve simplicity of Chinese Camp.

And with this receding figure bringing up the rear of the procession, I close my review of the Argonauts of '49. In their rank and file there may be many who are personally known to some of my hearers. There may be gaps which the memory of others can supply. There are homes all over the world whose vacant places never can be filled; there are graves all over California on whose nameless mounds no one shall weep. I have said that it is not a pretty story. I should like to end it with a flourish of trumpets, but the band has gone on before, and the dust

of the highway is beginning to hide them from my view. They are marching on to their city by the sea — to that great lodestone hill that Sindbad saw, which they call "Lone Mountain." There, waiting at its base, one may fancy the Argo is still lying, and that when the last Argonaut shall have passed in, she too will spread her white wings and slip unnoticed through the Golden Gate that opens in the distance.

TALES OF THE ARGONAUTS

THE ILIAD OF SANDY BAR

Before nine o'clock it was pretty well known all along the river that the two parties of the "Amity Claim" had quarreled and separated at daybreak. At that time the attention of their nearest neighbor had been attracted by the sounds of altercations and two consecutive pistol-shots. Running out, he had seen dimly in the gray mist that rose from the river the tall form of Scott, one of the partners, descending the hill toward the cañon; a moment later, York, the other partner, had appeared from the cabin, and walked in an opposite direction toward the river, passing within a few feet of the curious watcher. Later it was discovered that a serious Chinaman, cutting wood before the cabin, had witnessed part of the quarrel. But John was stolid, indifferent, and reticent. "Me choppee wood, me no fightee," was his serene response to all anxious queries. "But what did they *say*, John?" John did not *sabe*. Colonel Starbottle deftly ran over the various popular epithets which a generous public sentiment might accept as reasonable provocation for an assault. But John did not recognize them. "And this yer 's the cattle," said the Colonel, with some severity, "that some thinks oughter be allowed to testify agin a White Man! Git — you heathen!"

Still the quarrel remained inexplicable. That two men,

whose amiability and grave tact had earned for them the title of "The Peacemakers," in a community not greatly given to the passive virtues, — that these men, singularly devoted to each other, should suddenly and violently quarrel, might well excite the curiosity of the camp. A few of the more inquisitive visited the late scene of conflict, now deserted by its former occupants. There was no trace of disorder or confusion in the neat cabin. The rude table was arranged as if for breakfast; the pan of yellow biscuit still sat upon that hearth whose dead embers might have typified the evil passions that had raged there but an hour before. But Colonel Starbottle's eye, albeit somewhat bloodshot and rheumy, was more intent on practical details. On examination, a bullet-hole was found in the doorpost, and another nearly opposite in the casing of the window. The Colonel called attention to the fact that the one "agreed with" the bore of Scott's revolver, and the other with that of York's derringer. "They must hev stood about yer," said the Colonel, taking position; "not more'n three feet apart, and — missed!" There was a fine touch of pathos in the falling inflection of the Colonel's voice, which was not without effect. A delicate perception of wasted opportunity thrilled his auditors.

But the Bar was destined to experience a greater disappointment. The two antagonists had not met since the quarrel, and it was vaguely rumored that, on the occasion of a second meeting, each had determined to kill the other "on sight." There was, consequently, some excitement — and, it is to be feared, no little gratification — when, at ten o'clock, York stepped from the Magnolia Saloon into the one long straggling street of the camp, at the same moment that Scott left the blacksmith's shop at the forks of the road. It was evident, at a glance, that a meeting could only be avoided by the actual retreat of one or the other.

In an instant the doors and windows of the adjacent

saloons were filled with faces. Heads unaccountably appeared above the river banks and from behind boulders. An empty wagon at the cross-road was suddenly crowded with people, who seemed to have sprung from the earth. There was much running and confusion on the hillside. On the mountain-road, Mr. Jack Hamlin had reined up his horse and was standing upright on the seat of his buggy. And the two objects of this absorbing attention approached each other.

"York 's got the sun," "Scott 'll line him on that tree," "He 's waiting to draw his fire," came from the cart; and then it was silent. But above this human breathlessness the river rushed and sang, and the wind rustled the tree-tops with an indifference that seemed obtrusive. Colonel Starbottle felt it, and in a moment of sublime preoccupation, without looking around, waved his cane behind him warningly to all Nature, and said, "Shu!"

The men were now within a few feet of each other. A hen ran across the road before one of them. A feathery seed vessel, wafted from a wayside tree, fell at the feet of the other. And, unheeding this irony of Nature, the two opponents came nearer, erect and rigid, looked in each other's eyes, and — passed!

Colonel Starbottle had to be lifted from the cart. "This yer camp is played out," he said gloomily, as he affected to be supported into the Magnolia. With what further expression he might have indicated his feelings it was impossible to say, for at that moment Scott joined the group. "Did you speak to me?" he asked of the Colonel, dropping his hand, as if with accidental familiarity, on that gentleman's shoulder. The Colonel, recognizing some occult quality in the touch, and some unknown quantity in the glance of his questioner, contented himself by replying, "No, sir," with dignity. A few rods away, York's conduct was as characteristic and peculiar. "You had a mighty fine chance;

why did n't you plump him ?" said Jack Hamlin, as York drew near the buggy. "Because I hate him," was the reply, heard only by Jack. Contrary to popular belief, this reply was not hissed between the lips of the speaker, but was said in an ordinary tone. But Jack Hamlin, who was an observer of mankind, noticed that the speaker's hands were cold and his lips dry, as he helped him into the buggy, and accepted the seeming paradox with a smile.

When Sandy Bar became convinced that the quarrel between York and Scott could not be settled after the usual local methods, it gave no further concern thereto. But presently it was rumored that the "Amity Claim" was in litigation, and that its possession would be expensively disputed by each of the partners. As it was well known that the claim in question was "worked out" and worthless, and that the partners whom it had already enriched had talked of abandoning it but a day or two before the quarrel, this proceeding could only be accounted for as gratuitous spite. Later, two San Francisco lawyers made their appearance in this guileless Arcadia, and were eventually taken into the saloons, and — what was pretty much the same thing — the confidences of the inhabitants. The results of this unhallowed intimacy were many subpœnas; and, indeed, when the "Amity Claim" came to trial, all of Sandy Bar that was not in compulsory attendance at the county seat came there from curiosity. The gulches and ditches for miles around were deserted. I do not propose to describe that already famous trial. Enough that, in the language of the plaintiff's counsel, "it was one of no ordinary significance, involving the inherent rights of that untiring industry which had developed the Pactolian resources of this golden land;" and, in the homelier phrase of Colonel Starbottle, "a fuss that gentlemen might hev settled in ten minutes over a social glass, ef they meant business; or in ten seconds with a revolver, ef they meant fun." Scott got a

verdict, from which York instantly appealed. It was said that he had sworn to spend his last dollar in the struggle.

In this way Sandy Bar began to accept the enmity of the former partners as a lifelong feud, and the fact that they had ever been friends was forgotten. The few who expected to learn from the trial the origin of the quarrel were disappointed. Among the various conjectures, that which ascribed some occult feminine influence as the cause was naturally popular in a camp given to dubious compliment of the sex. "My word for it, gentlemen," said Colonel Starbottle, who had been known in Sacramento as a Gentleman of the Old School, "there 's some lovely creature at the bottom of this." The gallant Colonel then proceeded to illustrate his theory by divers sprightly stories, such as Gentlemen of the Old School are in the habit of repeating, but which, from deference to the prejudices of gentlemen of a more recent school, I refrain from transcribing here. But it would appear that even the Colonel's theory was fallacious. The only woman who personally might have exercised any influence over the partners was the pretty daughter of "old man Folinsbee," of Poverty Flat, at whose hospitable house — which exhibited some comforts and refinements rare in that crude civilization — both York and Scott were frequent visitors. Yet into this charming retreat York strode one evening a month after the quarrel, and, beholding Scott sitting there, turned to the fair hostess with the abrupt query, "Do you love this man?" The young woman thus addressed returned that answer — at once spirited and evasive — which would occur to most of my fair readers in such an emergency. Without another word, York left the house. "Miss Jo" heaved the least possible sigh as the door closed on York's curls and square shoulders, and then, like a good girl, turned to her insulted guest. "But would you believe it, dear?" she afterwards related to an intimate friend, "the other creature, afte-

glowering at me for a moment, got upon its hind legs, took its hat, and left too; and that 's the last I 've seen of either."

The same hard disregard of all other interests or feelings in the gratification of their blind rancor characterized all their actions. When York purchased the land below Scott's new claim, and obliged the latter, at a great expense, to make a long détour to carry a "tail-race" around it, Scott retaliated by building a dam that overflowed York's claim on the river. It was Scott who, in conjunction with Colonel Starbottle, first organized that active opposition to the Chinamen which resulted in the driving off of York's Mongolian laborers; it was York who built the wagon-road and established the express which rendered Scott's mules and packtrains obsolete; it was Scott who called into life the Vigilance Committee which expatriated York's friend, Jack Hamlin; it was York who created the "Sandy Bar Herald," which characterized the act as "a lawless outrage" and Scott as a "Border Ruffian;" it was Scott, at the head of twenty masked men, who, one moonlight night, threw the offending "forms" into the yellow river, and scattered the types in the dusty road. These proceedings were received in the distant and more civilized outlying towns as vague indications of progress and vitality. I have before me a copy of the "Poverty Flat Pioneer" for the week ending August 12, 1856, in which the editor, under the head of "County Improvements," says: "The new Presbyterian Church on C Street, at Sandy Bar, is completed. It stands upon the lot formerly occupied by the Magnolia Saloon, which was so mysteriously burnt last month. The temple, which now rises like a Phœnix from the ashes of the Magnolia, is virtually the free gift of H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, who purchased the lot and donated the lumber. Other buildings are going up in the vicinity, but the most noticeable is the 'Sunny South Saloon,' erected by Captain

Mat. Scott, nearly opposite the church. Captain Scott has spared no expense in the furnishing of this saloon, which promises to be one of the most agreeable places of resort in old Tuolumne. He has recently imported two new first-class billiard-tables with cork cushions. Our old friend, 'Mountain Jimmy,' will dispense liquors at the bar. We refer our readers to the advertisement in another column. Visitors to Sandy Bar cannot do better than give 'Jimmy' a call." Among the local items occurred the following: "H. J. York, Esq., of Sandy Bar, has offered a reward of $100 for the detection of the parties who hauled away the steps of the new Presbyterian Church, C Street, Sandy Bar, during divine service on Sabbath evening last. Captain Scott adds another hundred for the capture of the miscreants who broke the magnificent plate-glass windows of the new saloon on the following evening. There is some talk of reorganizing the old Vigilance Committee at Sandy Bar."

When, for many months of cloudless weather, the hard, unwinking sun of Sandy Bar had regularly gone down on the unpacified wrath of these men, there was some talk of mediation. In particular, the pastor of the church to which I have just referred — a sincere, fearless, but perhaps not fully enlightened man — seized gladly upon the occasion of York's liberality to attempt to reunite the former partners. He preached an earnest sermon on the abstract sinfulness of discord and rancor. But the excellent sermons of the Rev. Mr. Daws were directed to an ideal congregation that did not exist at Sandy Bar, — a congregation of beings of unmixed vices and virtues, of single impulses, and perfectly logical motives, of preternatural simplicity, of childlike faith, and grown-up responsibilities. As unfortunately the people who actually attended Mr. Daws's church were mainly very human, somewhat artful, more self-excusing than self-accusing, rather good-natured, and decidedly weak, they

quietly shed that portion of the sermon which referred to themselves, and accepting York and Scott — who were both in defiant attendance — as curious examples of those ideal beings above referred to, felt a certain satisfaction — which, I fear, was not altogether Christian-like — in their "raking-down." If Mr. Daws expected York and Scott to shake hands after the sermon, he was disappointed. But he did not relax his purpose. With that quiet fearlessness and determination which had won for him the respect of men who were too apt to regard piety as synonymous with effeminacy, he attacked Scott in his own house. What he said has not been recorded, but it is to be feared that it was part of his sermon. When he had concluded, Scott looked at him, not unkindly, over the glasses of his bar, and said, less irreverently than the words might convey, "Young man, I rather like your style; but when you know York and me as well as you do God Almighty, it'll be time to talk."

And so the feud progressed; and so, as in more illustrious examples, the private and personal enmity of two representative men led gradually to the evolution of some crude, half-expressed principle or belief. It was not long before it was made evident that those beliefs were identical with certain broad principles laid down by the founders of the American Constitution, as expounded by the statesmanlike A., or were the fatal quicksands on which the ship of state might be wrecked, warningly pointed out by the eloquent B. The practical result of all which was the nomination of York and Scott to represent the opposite factions of Sandy Bar in legislative councils.

For some weeks past the voters of Sandy Bar and the adjacent camps had been called upon, in large type, to "RALLY!" In vain the great pines at the cross-roads — whose trunks were compelled to bear this and other legends

— moaned and protested from their windy watch-towers. But one day, with fife and drum and flaming transparency, a procession filed into the triangular grove at the head of the gulch. The meeting was called to order by Colonel Starbottle, who, having once enjoyed legislative functions, and being vaguely known as "war-horse," was considered to be a valuable partisan of York. He concluded an appeal for his friend with an enunciation of principles, interspersed with one or two anecdotes so gratuitously coarse that the very pines might have been moved to pelt him with their cast-off cones as he stood there. But he created a laugh, on which his candidate rode into popular notice; and when York rose to speak, he was greeted with cheers. But, to the general astonishment, the new speaker at once launched into bitter denunciation of his rival. He not only dwelt upon Scott's deeds and example as known to Sandy Bar, but spoke of facts connected with his previous career hitherto unknown to his auditors. To great precision of epithet and directness of statement, the speaker added the fascination of revelation and exposure. The crowd cheered, yelled, and were delighted; but when this astounding philippic was concluded, there was a unanimous call for "Scott!" Colonel Starbottle would have resisted this manifest impropriety, but in vain. Partly from a crude sense of justice, partly from a meaner craving for excitement, the assemblage was inflexible; and Scott was dragged, pushed, and pulled upon the platform. As his frowsy head and unkempt beard appeared above the railing, it was evident that he was drunk. But it was also evident, before he opened his lips, that the orator of Sandy Bar — the one man who could touch their vagabond sympathies (perhaps because he was not above appealing to them) — stood before them. A consciousness of this power lent a certain dignity to his figure, and I am not sure but that his very physical condition impressed them as a kind of regal unbending

and large condescension. Howbeit, when this unexpected Hector arose from this ditch, York's myrmidons trembled. "There 's naught, gentlemen," said Scott, leaning forward on the railing, — "there 's naught as that man hez said as is n't true. I *was* run outer Cairo; I *did* belong to the Regulators; I *did* desert from the army; I *did* leave a wife in Kansas. But thar 's one thing he did n't charge me with, and maybe he 's forgotten. For three years, gentlemen, I was that man's pardner!" Whether he intended to say more, I cannot tell; a burst of applause artistically rounded and enforced the climax, and virtually elected the speaker. That fall he went to Sacramento, York went abroad, and for the first time in many years distance and a new atmosphere isolated the old antagonists.

With little of change in the green wood, gray rock, and yellow river, but with much shifting of human landmarks and new faces in its habitations, three years passed over Sandy Bar. The two men, once so identified with its character, seemed to have been quite forgotten. "You will never return to Sandy Bar," said Miss Folinsbee, the "Lily of Poverty Flat," on meeting York in Paris, "for Sandy Bar is no more. They call it Riverside now; and the new town is built higher up on the river bank. By the bye, 'Jo' says that Scott has won his suit about the 'Amity Claim,' and that he lives in the old cabin, and is drunk half his time. Oh, I beg your pardon," added the lively lady, as a flush crossed York's sallow cheek; "but, bless me, I really thought that old grudge was made up. I 'm sure it ought to be."

It was three months after this conversation, and a pleasant summer evening, that the Poverty Flat coach drew up before the veranda of the Union Hotel at Sandy Bar. Among its passengers was one, apparently a stranger, in the local distinction of well-fitting clothes and closely shaven face, who demanded a private room and retired early to rest.

But before sunrise next morning he arose, and, drawing some clothes from his carpet-bag, proceeded to array himself in a pair of white duck trousers, a white duck overshirt, and straw hat. When his toilet was completed, he tied a red bandana handkerchief in a loop and threw it loosely over his shoulders. The transformation was complete. As he crept softly down the stairs and stepped into the road, no one would have detected in him the elegant stranger of the previous night, and but few have recognized the face and figure of Henry York, of Sandy Bar.

In the uncertain light of that early hour, and in the change that had come over the settlement, he had to pause for a moment to recall where he stood. The Sandy Bar of his recollection lay below him, nearer the river; the buildings around him were of later date and newer fashion. As he strode toward the river, he noticed here a schoolhouse and there a church. A little farther on, the "Sunny South" came in view, transformed into a restaurant, its gilding faded and its paint rubbed off. He now knew where he was; and running briskly down a declivity, crossed a ditch, and stood upon the lower boundary of the "Amity Claim."

The gray mist was rising slowly from the river, clinging to the tree-tops and drifting up the mountain-side until it was caught among these rocky altars, and held a sacrifice to the ascending sun. At his feet the earth, cruelly gashed and scarred by his forgotten engines, had, since the old days, put on a show of greenness here and there, and now smiled forgivingly up at him, as if things were not so bad after all. A few birds were bathing in the ditch with a pleasant suggestion of its being a new and special provision of Nature, and a hare ran into an inverted sluice-box as he approached, as if it were put there for that purpose.

He had not yet dared to look in a certain direction. But the sun was now high enough to paint the little emi-

nence on which the cabin stood. In spite of his self-control, his heart beat faster as he raised his eyes toward it. Its window and door were closed, no smoke came from its adobe chimney, but it was else unchanged. When within a few yards of it, he picked up a broken shovel, and shouldering it with a smile, he strode toward the door and knocked. There was no sound from within. The smile died upon his lips as he nervously pushed the door open.

A figure started up angrily and came toward him, — a figure whose bloodshot eyes suddenly fixed into a vacant stare, whose arms were at first outstretched and then thrown up in warning gesticulation, — a figure that suddenly gasped, choked, and then fell forward in a fit.

But before he touched the ground, York had him out into the open air and sunshine. In the struggle, both fell and rolled over on the ground. But the next moment York was sitting up, holding the convulsed frame of his former partner on his knee, and wiping the foam from his inarticulate lips. Gradually the tremor became less frequent and then ceased, and the strong man lay unconscious in his arms.

For some moments York held him quietly thus, looking in his face. Afar, the stroke of a woodman's axe — a mere phantom of sound — was all that broke the stillness. High up the mountain, a wheeling hawk hung breathlessly above them. And then came voices, and two men joined them.

"A fight?" No, a fit; and would they help him bring the sick man to the hotel?

And there for a week the stricken partner lay, unconscious of aught but the visions wrought by disease and fear. On the eighth day at sunrise he rallied, and opening his eyes, looked upon York and pressed his hand; and then he spoke: —

"And it 's you. I thought it was only whiskey."

York replied by only taking both of his hands, boyishly

working them backward and forward, as his elbow rested on the bed, with a pleasant smile.

"And you 've been abroad. How did you like Paris?"

"So, so! How did *you* like Sacramento?"

"Bully!"

And that was all they could think to say. Presently Scott opened his eyes again.

"I 'm mighty weak."

"You 'll get better soon."

"Not much."

A long silence followed, in which they could hear the sounds of wood-chopping, and that Sandy Bar was already astir for the coming day. Then Scott slowly and with difficulty turned his face to York and said,—

"I might hev killed you once."

"I wish you had."

They pressed each other's hands again, but Scott's grasp was evidently failing. He seemed to summon his energies for a special effort.

"Old man!"

"Old chap."

"Closer!"

York bent his head toward the slowly fading face.

"Do ye mind that morning?"

"Yes."

A gleam of fun slid into the corner of Scott's blue eye as he whispered,—

"Old man, thar *was* too much saleratus in that bread!"

It is said that these were his last words. For when the sun, which had so often gone down upon the idle wrath of these foolish men, looked again upon them reunited, it saw the hand of Scott fall cold and irresponsive from the yearning clasp of his former partner, and it knew that the feud of Sandy Bar was at an end.

MR. THOMPSON'S PRODIGAL

We all knew that Mr. Thompson was looking for his son, and a pretty bad one at that. That he was coming to California for this sole object was no secret to his fellow-passengers; and the physical peculiarities as well as the moral weaknesses of the missing prodigal were made equally plain to us through the frank volubility of the parent. "You was speaking of a young man which was hung at Red Dog for sluice-robbing," said Mr. Thompson to a steerage passenger one day; "be you aware of the color of his eyes?" "Black," responded the passenger. "Ah!" said Mr. Thompson, referring to some mental memoranda, "Char-les's eyes was blue." He then walked away. Perhaps it was from this unsympathetic mode of inquiry, perhaps it was from that Western predilection to take a humorous view of any principle or sentiment persistently brought before them, that Mr. Thompson's quest was the subject of some satire among the passengers. A gratuitous advertisement of the missing Charles, addressed to "Jailers and Guardians," circulated privately among them; everybody remembered to have met Charles under distressing circumstances. Yet it is but due to my countrymen to state that when it was known that Thompson had embarked some wealth in this visionary project, but little of this satire found its way to his ears, and nothing was uttered in his hearing that might bring a pang to a father's heart or imperil a possible pecuniary advantage of the satirist. Indeed, Mr. Bracy Tibbets' jocular proposition to form a joint-stock company to "prospect" for the missing youth received at one time quite serious entertainment.

Perhaps to superficial criticism Mr. Thompson's nature was not picturesque nor lovable. His history, as imparted at dinner one day by himself, was practical even in its singularity. After a hard and willful youth and maturity, in which he had buried a broken-spirited wife and driven his son to sea, he suddenly experienced religion. "I got it in New Orleans in '59," said Mr. Thompson, with the general suggestion of referring to an epidemic. "Enter ye the narrer gate. Parse me the beans." Perhaps this practical quality upheld him in his apparently hopeless search. He had no clue to the whereabouts of his runaway son; indeed, scarcely a proof of his present existence. From his indifferent recollection of the boy of twelve he now expected to identify the man of twenty-five.

It would seem that he was successful. How he succeeded was one of the few things he did not tell. There are, I believe, two versions of the story. One, that Mr. Thompson, visiting a hospital, discovered his son by reason of a peculiar hymn, chanted by the sufferer in a delirious dream of his boyhood. This version, giving as it did wide range to the finer feelings of the heart, was quite popular; and as told by the Rev. Mr. Gushington on his return from his California tour, never failed to satisfy an audience. The other was less simple, and, as I shall adopt it here, deserves more elaboration.

It was after Mr. Thompson had given up searching for his son among the living, and had taken to the examination of cemeteries and a careful inspection of the "cold *hic jacets* of the dead." At this time he was a frequent visitor of "Lone Mountain," a dreary hill-top, bleak enough in its original isolation, and bleaker for the white-faced marbles by which San Francisco anchored her departed citizens, and kept them down in a shifting sand that refused to cover them, and against a fierce and persistent wind that strove to blow them utterly away. Against this wind the

old man opposed a will quite as persistent, a grizzled hard face, and a tall crape-bound hat drawn tightly over his eyes, — and so spent days in reading the mortuary inscriptions audibly to himself. The frequency of Scriptural quotation pleased him, and he was fond of corroborating them by a pocket Bible. "That 's from Psalms," he said one day to an adjacent gravedigger. The man made no reply. Not at all rebuffed, Mr. Thompson at once slid down into the open grave with a more practical inquiry, "Did you ever, in your profession, come across Char-les Thompson?" "Thompson be d—d!" said the gravedigger, with great directness. "Which, if he had n't religion, I think he is," responded the old man, as he clambered out of the grave.

It was perhaps on this occasion that Mr. Thompson stayed later than usual. As he turned his face toward the city, lights were beginning to twinkle ahead, and a fierce wind, made visible by fog, drove him forward, or, lying in wait, charged him angrily from the corners of deserted suburban streets. It was at one of these corners that something else, quite as indistinct and malevolent, leaped upon him with an oath, a presented pistol, and a demand for money. But it was met by a will of iron and a grip of steel. The assailant and assailed rolled together on the ground. But the next moment the old man was erect; one hand grasping the captured pistol, the other clutching at arm's length the throat of a figure, surly, youthful, and savage.

"Young man," said Mr. Thompson, setting his thin lips together, "what might be your name?"

"Thompson!"

The old man's hand slid from the throat to the arm of his prisoner without relaxing its firmness.

"Char-les Thompson, come with me," he said presently, and marched his captive to the hotel. What took place there has not transpired, but it was known the next morning that Mr. Thompson had found his son.

It is proper to add to the above improbable story, that there was nothing in the young man's appearance or manners to justify it. Grave, reticent, and handsome, devoted to his newly found parent, he assumed the emoluments and responsibilities of his new condition with a certain serious ease that more nearly approached that which San Francisco society lacked and — rejected. Some chose to despise this quality as a tendency to "psalm singing;" others saw in it the inherited qualities of the parent, and were ready to prophesy for the son the same hard old age. But all agreed that it was not inconsistent with the habits of money-getting for which father and son were respected.

And yet the old man did not seem to be happy. Perhaps it was that the consummation of his wishes left him without a practical mission; perhaps — and it is the more probable — he had little love for the son he had regained. The obedience he exacted was freely given, the reform he had set his heart upon was complete; and yet somehow it did not seem to please him. In reclaiming his son he had fulfilled all the requirements that his religious duty required of him, and yet the act seemed to lack sanctification. In this perplexity he read again the parable of the Prodigal Son, which he had long ago adopted for his guidance, and found that he had omitted the final feast of reconciliation. This seemed to offer the proper quality of ceremoniousness in the sacrament between himself and his son and so, a year after the appearance of Charles, he set about giving him a party. "Invite everybody, Char-les," he said dryly; "everybody who knows that I brought you out of the swine-husks of iniquity and the company of harlots, and bid them eat, drink, and be merry."

Perhaps the old man had another reason, not yet clearly analyzed. The fine house he had built on the sandhills sometimes seemed lonely and bare. He often found himself trying to reconstruct, from the grave features of Charles,

the little boy whom he but dimly remembered in the past, and of whom lately he had been thinking a great deal. He believed this to be a sign of impending old age and childishness; but coming one day, in his formal drawing-room, upon a child of one of the servants, who had strayed therein, he would have taken him in his arms, but the child fled from before his grizzled face. So that it seemed eminently proper to invite a number of people to his house, and from the array of San Francisco maidenhood to select a daughter-in-law. And then there would be a child — a boy, whom he could "rare up" from the beginning, and love — as he did not love Charles.

We were all at the party. The Smiths, Joneses, Browns, and Robinsons also came, in that fine flow of animal spirits, unchecked by any respect for the entertainer, which most of us are apt to find so fascinating. The proceedings would have been somewhat riotous but for the social position of the actors. In fact, Mr. Bracy Tibbets, having naturally a fine appreciation of a humorous situation, but further impelled by the bright eyes of the Jones girls, conducted himself so remarkably as to attract the serious regard of Mr. Charles Thompson, who approached him, saying quietly, "You look ill, Mr. Tibbets; let me conduct you to your carriage. Resist, you hound, and I 'll throw you through the window. This way, please; the room is close and distressing." It is hardly necessary to say that but a part of this speech was audible to the company, and that the rest was not divulged by Mr. Tibbets, who afterwards regretted the sudden illness which kept him from witnessing a certain amusing incident, which the fastest Miss Jones characterized as the "richest part of the blow-out," and which I hasten to record.

It was at supper. It was evident that Mr. Thompson had overlooked much lawlessness in the conduct of the younger people in his abstract contemplation of some im-

pending event. When the cloth was removed, he rose to his feet and grimly tapped upon the table. A titter, that broke out among the Jones girls, became epidemic on one side of the board. Charles Thompson, from the foot of the table, looked up in tender perplexity. "He 's going to sing a Doxology," "He 's going to pray," "Silence for a speech," ran round the room.

"It 's one year to-day, Christian brothers and sisters," said Mr. Thompson with grim deliberation, — "one year to-day since my son came home from eating of swine-husks and spending of his substance on harlots." (The tittering suddenly ceased.) "Look at him now. Charles Thompson, stand up." (Charles Thompson stood up.) "One year ago to-day, — and look at him now."

He was certainly a handsome prodigal, standing there in his cheerful evening-dress, — a repentant prodigal, with sad obedient eyes turned upon the harsh and unsympathetic glance of his father. The youngest Miss Smith, from the pure depths of her foolish little heart, moved unconsciously toward him.

"It 's fifteen years ago since he left my house," said Mr. Thompson, "a rovier and a prodigal. I was myself a man of sin, O Christian friends, — a man of wrath and bitterness" — ("Amen," from the eldest Miss Smith) — "but praise be God, I 've fled the wrath to come. It 's five years ago since I got the peace that passeth understanding. Have you got it, friends?" (A general sub-chorus of "No, no," from the girls, and, "Pass the word for it," from Midshipman Coxe, of the U. S. sloop Wethersfield.) "Knock, and it shall be opened to you.

"And when I found the error of my ways, and the preciousness of grace," continued Mr. Thompson, "I came to give it to my son. By sea and land I sought him far, and fainted not. I did not wait for him to come to me, which the same I might have done, and justified myself by

the Book of books, but I sought him out among his husks, and" (the rest of the sentence was lost, in the rustling withdrawal of the ladies). "Works, Christian friends, is my motto. By their works shall ye know them, and there is mine."

The particular and accepted work to which Mr. Thompson was alluding had turned quite pale, and was looking fixedly toward an open door leading to the veranda, lately filled by gaping servants, and now the scene of some vague tumult. As the noise continued, a man, shabbily dressed and evidently in liquor, broke through the opposing guardians and staggered into the room. The transition from the fog and darkness without to the glare and heat within evidently dazzled and stupefied him. He removed his battered hat, and passed it once or twice before his eyes, as he steadied himself, but unsuccessfully, by the back of a chair. Suddenly his wandering glance fell upon the pale face of Charles Thompson; and with a gleam of childlike recognition, and a weak falsetto laugh, he darted forward, caught at the table, upset the glasses, and literally fell upon the prodigal's breast.

"Sha'ly! yo' d—d ol' scoun'rel, hoo rar ye!"

"Hush! — sit down! — hush!" said Charles Thompson, hurriedly endeavoring to extricate himself from the embrace of his unexpected guest.

"Look at 'm!" continued the stranger, unheeding the admonition, but suddenly holding the unfortunate Charles at arm's length, in loving and undisguised admiration of his festive appearance. "Look at 'm! Ain't he nasty? Sha'ls I 'm prow of yer!"

"Leave the house!" said Mr. Thompson, rising, with a dangerous look in his cold gray eye. "Char-les, how dare you?"

"Simmer down, ole man! Sha'ls, who 's th' ol' bloat? Eh?"

"Hush, man; here, take this!" With nervous hands, Charles Thompson filled a glass with liquor. "Drink it and go — until to-morrow — any time, but — leave us! — go now!" But even then, ere the miserable wretch could drink, the old man, pale with passion, was upon him. Half carrying him in his powerful arms, half dragging him through the circling crowd of frightened guests, he had reached the door, swung open by the waiting servants, when Charles Thompson started from a seeming stupor, crying —

"Stop!"

The old man stopped. Through the open door the fog and wind drove chilly. "What does this mean?" he asked, turning a baleful face on Charles.

"Nothing — but stop — for God's sake. Wait till to-morrow, but not to-night. Do not, I implore you — do this thing."

There was something in the tone of the young man's voice, something, perhaps, in the contact of the struggling wretch he held in his powerful arms; but a dim, indefinite fear took possession of the old man's heart. "Who," he whispered hoarsely, "is this man?"

Charles did not answer.

"Stand back, there, all of you," thundered Mr. Thompson, to the crowding guests around him. "Char-les — come here! I command you — I — I — I — beg you — tell me *who* is this man?"

Only two persons heard the answer that came faintly from the lips of Charles Thompson —

"YOUR SON."

When day broke over the bleak sandhills, the guests had departed from Mr. Thompson's banquet-hall. The lights still burned dimly and coldly in the deserted rooms, — deserted by all but three figures, that huddled together in the chill drawing-room, as if for warmth. One lay in drunken

slumber on a couch; at his feet sat he who had been known as Charles Thompson; and beside them, haggard and shrunken to half his size, bowed the figure of Mr. Thompson, his gray eye fixed, his elbows upon his knees, and his hands clasped over his ears, as if to shut out the sad, entreating voice that seemed to fill the room.

"God knows, I did not set about to willfully deceive. The name I gave that night was the first that came into my thought, — the name of one whom I thought dead, — the dissolute companion of my shame. And when you questioned further, I used the knowledge that I gained from him to touch your heart to set me free; only, I swear, for that! But when you told me who you were, and I first saw the opening of another life before me — then — then — O sir, if I was hungry, homeless, and reckless when I would have robbed you of your gold, I was heart-sick, helpless, and desperate when I would have robbed you of your love!"

The old man stirred not. From his luxurious couch the newly found prodigal snored peacefully.

"I had no father I could claim. I never knew a home but this. I was tempted. I have been happy, — very happy."

He rose and stood before the old man.

"Do not fear that I shall come between your son and his inheritance. To-day I leave this place, never to return. The world is large, sir, and, thanks to your kindness, I now see the way by which an honest livelihood is gained. Good-by. You will not take my hand? Well, well! Good-by."

He turned to go. But when he had reached the door he suddenly came back, and, raising with both hands the grizzled head, he kissed it once and twice.

"Char-les!"

There was no reply.

"Char-les!"

The old man rose with a frightened air, and tottered feebly to the door. It was open. There came to him the awakened tumult of a great city, in which the prodigal's footsteps were lost forever.

THE ROMANCE OF MADROÑO HOLLOW

The latch on the garden gate of the Folinsbee Ranch clicked twice. The gate itself was so much in shadow that lovely night, that "old man Folinsbee," sitting on his porch, could distinguish nothing but a tall white hat and beside it a few fluttering ribbons, under the pines that marked the entrance. Whether because of this fact, or that he considered a sufficient time had elapsed since the clicking of the latch for more positive disclosure, I do not know; but after a few moments' hesitation he quietly laid aside his pipe and walked slowly down the winding path toward the gate. At the Ceanothus hedge he stopped and listened.

There was not much to hear. The hat was saying to the ribbons that it was a fine night, and remarking generally upon the clear outline of the Sierras against the blue-black sky. The ribbons, it so appeared, had admired this all the way home, and asked the hat if it had ever seen anything half so lovely as the moonlight on the summit. The hat never had; it recalled some lovely nights in the South in Alabama ("in the South in Ahlabahm" was the way the old man heard it), but then there were other things that made this night seem so pleasant. The ribbons could not possibly conceive what the hat could be thinking about. At this point there was a pause, of which Mr. Folinsbee availed himself to walk very grimly and craunchingly down the gravel-walk toward the gate. Then the hat was lifted, and disappeared in the shadow, and Mr. Folinsbee confronted only the half-foolish, half-mischievous, but wholly pretty face of his daughter.

It was afterwards known to Madroño Hollow that sharp words passed between "Miss Jo" and the old man, and that the latter coupled the names of one Culpepper Starbottle and his uncle, Colonel Starbottle, with certain uncomplimentary epithets, and that Miss Jo retaliated sharply. "Her father's blood before her father's face boiled up and proved her truly of his race," quoted the blacksmith, who leaned toward the noble verse of Byron. "She saw the old man's bluff and raised him," was the direct comment of the college-bred Masters.

Meanwhile the subject of these animadversions proceeded slowly along the road to a point where the Folinsbee mansion came in view, — a long, narrow, white building, unpretentious, yet superior to its neighbors, and bearing some evidences of taste and refinement in the vines that clambered over its porch, in its French windows, and the white muslin curtains that kept out the fierce California sun by day, and were now touched with silver in the gracious moonlight. Culpepper leaned against the low fence, and gazed long and earnestly at the building. Then the moonlight vanished ghostlike from one of the windows, a material glow took its place, and a girlish figure, holding a candle, drew the white curtains together. To Culpepper it was a vestal virgin standing before a hallowed shrine; to the prosaic observer I fear it was only a dark-haired young woman, whose wicked black eyes still shone with unfilial warmth. Howbeit, when the figure had disappeared, he stepped out briskly into the moonlight of the highroad. Here he took off his distinguishing hat to wipe his forehead, and the moon shone full upon his face.

It was not an unprepossessing one, albeit a trifle too thin and lank and bilious to be altogether pleasant. The cheekbones were prominent, and the black eyes sunken in their orbits. Straight black hair fell slantwise off a high but narrow forehead, and swept part of a hollow cheek. A long

black mustache followed the perpendicular curves of his mouth. It was on the whole a serious, even Quixotic face, but at times it was relieved by a rare smile of such tender and even pathetic sweetness, that Miss Jo is reported to have said that, if it would only last through the ceremony, she would have married its possessor on the spot. "I once told him so," added that shameless young woman; "but the man instantly fell into a settled melancholy, and has n't smiled since."

A half mile below the Folinsbee Ranch the white road dipped and was crossed by a trail that ran through Madroño Hollow. Perhaps because it was a near cut-off to the settlement, perhaps from some less practical reason, Culpepper took this trail, and in a few moments stood among the rarely beautiful trees that gave their name to the valley. Even in that uncertain light, the weird beauty of these harlequin masqueraders was apparent; their red trunks — a blush in the moonlight, a deep blood-stain in the shadow — stood out against the silvery green foliage. It was as if Nature in some gracious moment had here caught and crystallized the gypsy memories of the transplanted Spaniard, to cheer him in his lonely exile.

As Culpepper entered the grove, he heard loud voices. As he turned toward a clump of trees, a figure so bizarre and characteristic that it might have been a resident Daphne — a figure over-dressed in crimson silk and lace, with bare brown arms and shoulders, and a wreath of honeysuckle — stepped out of the shadow. It was followed by a man. Culpepper started. To come to the point briefly, he recognized in the man the features of his respected uncle, Colonel Starbottle; in the female, a lady who may be briefly described as one possessing absolutely no claim to an introduction to the polite reader. To hurry over equally unpleasant details, both were evidently under the influence of liquor.

From the exciting conversation that ensued, Culpepper gathered that some insult had been put upon the lady at a public ball which she had attended that evening; that the Colonel, her escort, had failed to resent it with the sanguinary completeness that she desired. I regret that, even in a liberal age, I may not record the exact and even picturesque language in which this was conveyed to her hearers. Enough that at the close of a fiery peroration, with feminine inconsistency she flew at the gallant Colonel, and would have visited her delayed vengeance upon his luckless head, but for the prompt interference of Culpepper. Thwarted in this, she threw herself upon the ground, and then into unpicturesque hysterics. There was a fine moral lesson, not only in this grotesque performance of a sex which cannot afford to be grotesque, but in the ludicrous concern with which it inspired the two men. Culpepper, to whom woman was more or less angelic, was pained and sympathetic; the Colonel, to whom she was more or less improper, was exceedingly terrified and embarrassed. Howbeit the storm was soon over, and after Mistress Dolores had returned a little dagger to its sheath (her garter), she quietly took herself out of Madroño Hollow, and happily out of these pages forever. The two men, left to themselves, conversed in low tones. Dawn stole upon them before they separated: the Colonel quite sobered and in full possession of his usual jaunty self-assertion; Culpepper with a baleful glow in his hollow cheek, and in his dark eyes a rising fire.

The next morning the general ear of Madroño Hollow was filled with rumors of the Colonel's mishap. It was asserted that he had been invited to withdraw his female companion from the floor of the Assembly Ball at the Independence Hotel, and that, failing to do this, both were expelled. It is to be regretted that in 1854 public opinion was divided in regard to the propriety of this step, and

that there was some discussion as to the comparative virtue of the ladies who were not expelled; but it was generally conceded that the real *casus belli* was political. "Is this a dashed Puritan meeting?" had asked the Colonel savagely. "It 's no Pike County shindig," had responded the floor-manager cheerfully. "You 're a Yank!" had screamed the Colonel, profanely qualifying the noun. "Get! you border ruffian," was the reply. Such at least was the substance of the reports. As, at that sincere epoch, expressions like the above were usually followed by prompt action, a fracas was confidently looked for.

Nothing, however, occurred. Colonel Starbottle made his appearance next day upon the streets with somewhat of his usual pomposity, a little restrained by the presence of his nephew, who accompanied him, and who, as a universal favorite, also exercised some restraint upon the curious and impertinent. But Culpepper's face wore a look of anxiety quite at variance with his usual grave repose. "The Don don't seem to take the old man's set-back kindly," observed the sympathizing blacksmith. "P'r'aps he was sweet on Dolores himself," suggested the skeptical express-man.

It was a bright morning, a week after this occurrence, that Miss Jo Folinsbee stepped from her garden into the road. This time the latch did not click as she cautiously closed the gate behind her. After a moment's irresolution, which would have been awkward but that it was charmingly employed, after the manner of her sex, in adjusting a bow under a dimpled but rather prominent chin, and in pulling down the fingers of a neatly fitting glove, she tripped toward the settlement. Small wonder that a passing teamster drove six mules into the wayside ditch and imperiled his load to keep the dust from her spotless garments; small wonder that the "Lightning Express" withheld its speed and flash to let her pass, and

that the expressman, who had never been known to exchange more than rapid monosyllables with his fellow-man, gazed after her with breathless admiration. For she was certainly attractive. In a country where the ornamental sex followed the example of youthful Nature, and were prone to overdress and glaring efflorescence, Miss Jo's simple and tasteful raiment added much to the physical charm of, if it did not actually suggest a sentiment to, her presence. It is said that Euchre-deck Billy, working in the gulch at the crossing, never saw Miss Folinsbee pass but that he always remarked apologetically to his partner, that "he believed he *must* write a letter home." Even Bill Masters, who saw her in Paris presented to the favorable criticism of that most fastidious man, the late Emperor, said that she was stunning, but a big discount on what she was at Madroño Hollow.

It was still early morning, but the sun, with California extravagance, had already begun to beat hotly on the little chip hat and blue ribbons, and Miss Jo was obliged to seek the shade of a bypath. Here she received the timid advances of a vagabond yellow dog graciously, until, emboldened by his success, he insisted upon accompanying her, and, becoming slobberingly demonstrative, threatened her spotless skirt with his dusty paws, when she drove him from her with some slight acerbity, and a stone which haply fell within fifty feet of its destined mark. Having thus proved her ability to defend herself, with characteristic inconsistency she took a small panic, and, gathering her white skirts in one hand, and holding the brim of her hat over her eyes with the other, she ran swiftly at least a hundred yards before she stopped. Then she began picking some ferns and a few wild flowers still spared to the withered fields, and then a sudden distrust of her small ankles seized her, and she inspected them narrowly for those burrs and bugs and snakes which are supposed to lie

in wait for helpless womanhood. Then she plucked some golden heads of wild oats, and with a sudden inspiration placed them in her black hair, and then came quite unconsciously upon the trail leading to Madroño Hollow.

Here she hesitated. Before her ran the little trail, vanishing at last into the bosky depths below. The sun was very hot. She must be very far from home. Why should she not rest awhile under the shade of a madroño?

She answered these questions by going there at once. After thoroughly exploring the grove, and satisfying herself that it contained no other living human creature, she sat down under one of the largest trees with a satisfactory little sigh. Miss Jo loved the madroño. It was a cleanly tree; no dust ever lay upon its varnished leaves; its immaculate shade never was known to harbor grub or insect.

She looked up at the rosy arms interlocked and arched above her head. She looked down at the delicate ferns and cryptogams at her feet. Something glittered at the root of the tree. She picked it up; it was a bracelet. She examined it carefully for cipher or inscription; there was none. She could not resist a natural desire to clasp it on her arm, and to survey it from that advantageous viewpoint. This absorbed her attention for some moments; and when she looked up again she beheld at a little distance Culpepper Starbottle.

He was standing where he had halted, with instinctive delicacy, on first discovering her. Indeed, he had even deliberated whether he ought not to go away without disturbing her. But some fascination held him to the spot. Wonderful power of humanity! Far beyond jutted an outlying spur of the Sierra, vast, compact, and silent. Scarcely a hundred yards away, a league-long chasm dropped its sheer walls of granite a thousand feet. On every side rose up the serried ranks of pine-trees, in whose close-set files centuries of storm and change had wrought no breach.

Yet all this seemed to Culpepper to have been planned by an allwise Providence as the natural background to the figure of a pretty girl in a yellow dress.

Although Miss Jo had confidently expected to meet Culpepper somewhere in her ramble, now that he came upon her suddenly, she felt disappointed and embarrassed. His manner, too, was more than usually grave and serious, and more than ever seemed to jar upon that audacious levity which was this giddy girl's power and security in a society where all feeling was dangerous. As he approached her she rose to her feet, but almost before she knew it he had taken her hand and drawn her to a seat beside him. This was not what Miss Jo had expected, but nothing is so difficult to predicate as the exact preliminaries of a declaration of love.

What did Culpepper say? Nothing, I fear, that will add anything to the wisdom of the reader; nothing, I fear, that Miss Jo had not heard substantially from other lips before. But there was a certain conviction, fire-speed, and fury in the manner that was deliciously novel to the young lady. It was certainly something to be courted in the nineteenth century with all the passion and extravagance of the sixteenth; it was something to hear, amid the slang of a frontier society, the language of knight-errantry poured into her ear by this lantern-jawed, dark-browed descendant of the Cavaliers.

I do not know that there was anything more in it. The facts, however, go to show that at a certain point Miss Jo dropped her glove, and that in recovering it Culpepper possessed himself first of her hand and then her lips. When they stood up to go, Culpepper had his arm around her waist, and her black hair, with its sheaf of golden oats, rested against the breast-pocket of his coat. But even then I do not think her fancy was entirely captive. She took a certain satisfaction in this demonstration of Culpepper's

splendid height, and mentally compared it with a former flame, one Lieutenant McMirk, an active but under-sized Hector, who subsequently fell a victim to the incautiously composed and monotonous beverages of a frontier garrison. Nor was she so much preoccupied but that her quick eyes, even while absorbing Culpepper's glances, were yet able to detect, at a distance, the figure of a man approaching. In an instant she slipped out of Culpepper's arm, and, whipping her hands behind her, said, "There 's that horrid man!"

Culpepper looked up and beheld his respected uncle panting and blowing over the hill. His brow contracted as he turned to Miss Jo: "You don't like my uncle!"

"I hate him!" Miss Jo was recovering her ready tongue.

Culpepper blushed. He would have liked to enter upon some details of the Colonel's pedigree and exploits, but there was not time. He only smiled sadly. The smile melted Miss Jo. She held out her hand quickly, and said with even more than her usual effrontery, "Don't let that man get you into any trouble. Take care of yourself, dear, and don't let anything happen to you."

Miss Jo intended this speech to be pathetic; the tenure of life among her lovers had hitherto been very uncertain. Culpepper turned toward her, but she had already vanished in the thicket.

The Colonel came up panting. "I 've looked all over town for you, and be dashed to you, sir. Who was that with you?"

"A lady." (Culpepper never lied, but he was discreet.)

"D—n 'em all! Look yar, Culp, I 've spotted the man who gave the order to put me off the floor" ("flo" was what the Colonel said) "the other night!"

"Who was it?" asked Culpepper listlessly.

"Jack Folinsbee."

"Who?"

"Why, the son of that dashed, nigger-worshiping, psalm-singing, Puritan Yankee. What's the matter now? Look yar, Culp, you ain't goin' back on your blood, are ye? You ain't goin' back on your word? Ye ain't going down at the feet of this trash, like a whipped hound?"

Culpepper was silent. He was very white. Presently he looked up and said quietly, "No."

Culpepper Starbottle had challenged Jack Folinsbee, and the challenge was accepted. The cause alleged was the expelling of Culpepper's uncle from the floor of the Assembly Ball by the order of Folinsbee. This much Madroño Hollow knew and could swear to; but there were other strange rumors afloat, of which the blacksmith was an able expounder. "You see, gentlemen," he said to the crowd gathered around his anvil, "I ain't got no theory of this affair; I only give a few facts as have come to my knowledge. Culpepper and Jack meets quite accidental like in Bob's saloon. Jack goes up to Culpepper and says, 'A word with you.' Culpepper bows and steps aside in this way, Jack standing about *here*." (The blacksmith demonstrates the position of the parties with two old horse-shoes on the anvil.) "Jack pulls a bracelet from his pocket and says, 'Do you know that bracelet?' Culpepper says, 'I do not,' quite cool-like and easy. Jack says, 'You gave it to my sister.' Culpepper says, still cool as you please, 'I did not.' Jack says, 'You lie, G—d d—n you,' and draws his derringer. Culpepper jumps forward about here" (reference is made to the diagram) "and Jack fires. Nobody hit. It's a mighty cur'o's thing, gentlemen," continued the blacksmith, dropping suddenly into the abstract, and leaning meditatively on his anvil, — "it's a mighty cur'o's thing that nobody gets hit so often. You and me empties our revolvers sociably at each other

over a little game, and the room full, and nobody gets hit! That 's what gets me."

"Never mind, Thompson," chimed in Bill Masters; "there 's another and a better world where we shall know all that, and — become better shots. Go on with your story."

"Well, some grabs Culpepper and some grabs Jack, and so separates them. Then Jack tells 'em as how he had seen his sister wear a bracelet which he knew was one that had been given Dolores by Colonel Starbottle. That Miss Jo would n't say where she got it, but owned up to having seen Culpepper that day. Then, the most cur'o's thing of it yet, what does Culpepper do but rise up and takes all back that he said, and allows that he *did* give her the bracelet. Now my opinion, gentlemen, is that he lied; it ain't like that man to give a gal that he respects anything off of that piece, Dolores. But it 's all the same now, and there 's but one thing to be done."

The way this one thing was done belongs to the record of Madroño Hollow. The morning was bright and clear; the air was slightly chill, but that was from the mist which arose along the banks of the river. As early as six o'clock the designated ground — a little opening in the madroño grove — was occupied by Culpepper Starbottle, Colonel Starbottle, his second, and the surgeon. The Colonel was exalted and excited, albeit in a rather imposing, dignified way, and pointed out to the surgeon the excellence of the ground, which at that hour was wholly shaded from the sun, whose steady stare is more or less discomposing to your duelist. The surgeon threw himself on the grass and smoked his cigar. Culpepper, quiet and thoughtful, leaned against a tree and gazed up the river. There was a strange suggestion of a picnic about the group, which was heightened when the Colonel drew a bottle from his coat-tails, and, taking a preliminary draught, offered it to the others.

"Cocktails, sir," he explained with dignified precision. "A gentleman, sir, should never go out without 'em. Keeps off the morning chill. I remember going out in '53 with Hank Boompointer. Good ged, sir, the man had to put on his overcoat, and was shot in it. Fact!"

But the noise of wheels drowned the Colonel's reminiscences, and a rapidly driven buggy, containing Jack Folinsbee, Calhoun Bungstarter, his second, and Bill Masters, drew up on the ground. Jack Folinsbee leaped out gayly. "I had the jolliest work to get away without the governor's hearing," he began, addressing the group before him with the greatest volubility. Calhoun Bungstarter touched his arm, and the young man blushed. It was his first duel.

"If you are ready, gentlemen," said Mr. Bungstarter, "we had better proceed to business. I believe it is understood that no apology will be offered or accepted. We may as well settle preliminaries at once, or I fear we shall be interrupted. There is a rumor in town that the Vigilance Committee are seeking our friends the Starbottles, and I believe, as their fellow-countryman, I have the honor to be included in their warrant."

At this probability of interruption, that gravity which had hitherto been wanting fell upon the group. The preliminaries were soon arranged and the principals placed in position. Then there was a silence.

To a spectator from the hill, impressed with the picnic suggestion, what might have been the popping of two champagne corks broke the stillness.

Culpepper had fired in the air. Colonel Starbottle uttered a low curse. Jack Folinsbee sulkily demanded another shot.

Again the parties stood opposed to each other. Again the word was given, and what seemed to be the simultaneous report of both pistols rose upon the air. But after

an interval of a few seconds all were surprised to see Culpepper slowly raise his unexploded weapon and fire it harmlessly above his head. Then throwing the pistol upon the ground, he walked to a tree and leaned silently against it. Jack Folinsbee flew into a paroxysm of fury. Colonel Starbottle raved and swore. Mr. Bungstarter was properly shocked at their conduct. "Really, gentlemen, if Mr. Culpepper Starbottle declines another shot, I do not see how we can proceed."

But the Colonel's blood was up, and Jack Folinsbee was equally implacable. A hurried consultation ensued, which ended by Colonel Starbottle taking his nephew's place as principal, Bill Masters acting as second, *vice* Mr. Bungstarter, who declined all further connection with the affair.

Two distinct reports rang through the Hollow. Jack Folinsbee dropped his smoking pistol, took a step forward, and then dropped heavily upon his face.

In a moment the surgeon was at his side. The confusion was heightened by the trampling of hoofs, and the voice of the blacksmith bidding them flee for their lives before the coming storm. A moment more and the ground was cleared, and the surgeon, looking up, beheld only the white face of Culpepper bending over him.

"Can you save him?"

"I cannot say. Hold up his head a moment while I run to the buggy."

Culpepper passed his arm tenderly around the neck of the insensible man. Presently the surgeon returned with some stimulants.

"There, that will do, Mr. Starbottle, thank you. Now my advice is to get away from here while you can. I'll look after Folinsbee. Do you hear?"

Culpepper's arm was still round the neck of his late foe, but his head had dropped and fallen on the wounded

man's shoulder. The surgeon looked down, and catching sight of his face, stooped and lifted him gently in his arms. He opened his coat and waistcoat. There was blood upon his shirt and a bullet-hole in his breast. He had been shot unto death at the first fire!

THE POET OF SIERRA FLAT

As the enterprising editor of the "Sierra Flat Record" stood at his case setting type for his next week's paper, he could not help hearing the woodpeckers who were busy on the roof above his head. It occurred to him that possibly the birds had not yet learned to recognize in the rude structure any improvement on Nature, and this idea pleased him so much that he incorporated it in the editorial article which he was then doubly composing. For the editor was also printer of the "Record;" and although that remarkable journal was reputed to exert a power felt through all Calaveras and a great part of Tuolumne County, strict economy was one of the conditions of its beneficent existence.

Thus preoccupied, he was startled by the sudden irruption of a small roll of manuscript, which was thrown through the open door and fell at his feet. He walked quickly to the threshold and looked down the tangled trail which led to the highroad. But there was nothing to suggest the presence of his mysterious contributor. A hare limped slowly away, a green-and-gold lizard paused upon a pine stump, the woodpeckers ceased their work. So complete had been his sylvan seclusion, that he found it difficult to connect any human agency with the act; rather the hare seemed to have an inexpressibly guilty look, the woodpeckers to maintain a significant silence, and the lizard to be conscience-stricken into stone.

An examination of the manuscript, however, corrected this injustice to defenseless Nature. It was evidently of human origin, — being verse, and of exceeding bad quality.

The editor laid it aside. As he did so he thought he saw a face at the window. Sallying out in some indignation, he penetrated the surrounding thicket in every direction, but his search was as fruitless as before. The poet, if it were he, was gone.

A few days after this the editorial seclusion was invaded by voices of alternate expostulation and entreaty. Stepping to the door, the editor was amazed at beholding Mr. Morgan McCorkle, a well-known citizen of Angel's and a subscriber to the "Record," in the act of urging, partly by force and partly by argument, an awkward young man toward the building. When he had finally effected his object, and, as it were, safely landed his prize in a chair, Mr. McCorkle took off his hat, carefully wiped the narrow isthmus of forehead which divided his black brows from his stubby hair, and, with an explanatory wave of his hand toward his reluctant companion, said, "A borned poet, and the cussedest fool you ever seed!"

Accepting the editor's smile as a recognition of the introduction, Mr. McCorkle panted and went on: "Did n't want to come! 'Mister Editor don't want to see me, Morg,' sez he. 'Milt,' sez I, 'he do; a borned poet like you and a gifted genius like he oughter come together sociable!' And I fetched him. Ah, will yer?" The born poet had, after exhibiting signs of great distress, started to run. But Mr. McCorkle was down upon him instantly, seizing him by his long linen coat, and settled him back in his chair. "'T ain't no use stampeding. Yer ye are and yer ye stays. For yer a borned poet, — ef ye are as shy as a jackass rabbit. Look at 'im now!"

He certainly was not an attractive picture. There was hardly a notable feature in his weak face, except his eyes, which were moist and shy, and not unlike the animal to which Mr. McCorkle had compared him. It was the face that the editor had seen at the window.

"Knowed him for fower year, — since he war a boy," continued Mr. McCorkle in a loud whisper. "Allers the same, bless you! Can jerk a rhyme as easy as turnin' jack. Never had any eddication; lived out in Missooray all his life. But he's chock full o' poetry. On'y this mornin' sez I to him, — he camps along o' me, — 'Milt!' sez I, 'are breakfast ready?' and he up and answers back quite peart and chipper, 'The breakfast it is ready, and the birds is singing free, and it's risin' in the dawnin' light is happiness to me!' When a man," said Mr. McCorkle, dropping his voice with deep solemnity, "gets off things like them, without any call to do it, and handlin' flapjacks over a cookstove at the same time, — that man's a borned poet."

There was an awkward pause. Mr. McCorkle beamed patronizingly on his protégé. The born poet looked as if he were meditating another flight, — not a metaphorical one. The editor asked if he could do anything for them.

"In course you can," responded Mr. McCorkle, "that's jest it. Milt, where's that poetry?"

The editor's countenance fell as the poet produced from his pocket a roll of manuscript. He, however, took it mechanically and glanced over it. It was evidently a duplicate of the former mysterious contribution.

The editor then spoke briefly but earnestly. I regret that I cannot recall his exact words, but it appeared that never before, in the history of the "Record," had the pressure been so great upon its columns. Matters of paramount importance, deeply affecting the material progress of Sierra, questions touching the absolute integrity of Calaveras and Tuolumne as social communities, were even now waiting expression. Weeks, nay, months, must elapse before that pressure would be removed, and the "Record" could grapple with any but the sternest of topics. Again, the editor had noticed with pain the absolute decline of poetry in the foothills of the Sierras. Even the works of Byron and

Moore attracted no attention in Dutch Flat, and a prejudice seemed to exist against Tennyson in Grass Valley. But the editor was not without hope for the future. In the course of four or five years, when the country was settled —

"What would be the cost to print this yer?" interrupted Mr. McCorkle quietly.

"About fifty dollars, as an advertisement," responded the editor with cheerful alacrity.

Mr. McCorkle placed the sum in the editor's hand. "Yer see thet's what I sez to Milt. 'Milt,' sez I, 'pay as you go, for you are a borned poet. Hevin' no call to write, but doin' it free and spontaneous like, in course you pays. Thet's why Mr. Editor never printed your poetry.'"

"What name shall I put to it?" asked the editor.

"Milton."

It was the first word that the born poet had spoken during the interview, and his voice was so very sweet and musical that the editor looked at him curiously, and wondered if he had a sister.

"Milton! is that all?"

"Thet's his furst name," exclaimed Mr. McCorkle.

The editor here suggested that as there had been another poet of that name —

"Milt might be took for him! Thet's bad," reflected Mr. McCorkle with simple gravity. "Well, put down his full name, — Milton Chubbuck."

The editor made a note of the fact. "I'll set it up now," he said. This was also a hint that the interview was ended. The poet and patron, arm in arm, drew towards the door. "In next week's paper," said the editor smilingly, in answer to the childlike look of inquiry in the eyes of the poet, and in another moment they were gone.

The editor was as good as his word. He straightway betook himself to his case, and, unrolling the manuscript,

began his task. The woodpeckers on the roof recommenced theirs, and in a few moments the former sylvan seclusion was restored. There was no sound in the barren, barn-like room but the birds above, and below the click of the composing-rule as the editor marshaled the types into lines in his stick, and arrayed them in solid column on the galley. Whatever might have been his opinion of the copy before him, there was no indication of it in his face, which wore the stolid indifference of his craft. Perhaps this was unfortunate, for as the day wore on and the level rays of the sun began to pierce the adjacent thicket, they sought out and discovered an anxious ambush figure drawn up beside the editor's window, — a figure that had sat there motionless for hours. Within, the editor worked on as steadily and impassively as Fate. And without, the born poet of Sierra Flat sat and watched him as waiting its decree.

The effect of the poem on Sierra Flat was remarkable and unprecedented. The absolute vileness of its doggerel, the gratuitous imbecility of its thought, and above all the crowning audacity of the fact that it was the work of a citizen and published in the county paper, brought it instantly into popularity. For many months Calaveras had languished for a sensation; since the last Vigilance Committee nothing had transpired to dispel the listless ennui begotten of stagnant business and growing civilization. In more prosperous moments the office of the "Record" would have been simply gutted and the editor deported; at present the paper was in such demand that the edition was speedily exhausted. In brief, the poem of Mr. Milton Chubbuck came like a special providence to Sierra Flat. It was read by camp-fires, in lonely cabins, in flaring bar-rooms and noisy saloons, and declaimed from the boxes of stage-coaches. It was sung in Poker Flat with the addition of a local chorus, and danced as an unhallowed rhythmic dance by the Pyrrhic

phalanx of One Horse Gulch, known as "The Festive Stags of Calaveras." Some unhappy ambiguities of expression gave rise to many new readings, notes, and commentaries, which, I regret to state, were more often marked by ingenuity than delicacy of thought or expression.

Never before did poet acquire such sudden local reputation. From the seclusion of McCorkle's cabin and the obscurity of culinary labors he was haled forth into the glowing sunshine of Fame. The name of Chubbuck was written in letters of chalk on unpainted walls and carved with a pick on the sides of tunnels. A drink known variously as "The Chubbuck Tranquilizer" or "The Chubbuck Exalter" was dispensed at the bars. For some weeks a rude design for a Chubbuck statue, made up of illustrations from circus and melodeon posters, representing the genius of Calaveras in brief skirts on a flying steed in the act of crowning the poet Chubbuck, was visible at Keeler's Ferry. The poet himself was overborne with invitations to drink and extravagant congratulations. The meeting between Colonel Starbottle of Siskiyou and Chubbuck, as previously arranged by our "Boston," late of Roaring Camp, is said to have been indescribably affecting. The Colonel embraced him unsteadily. "I could not return to my constituents at Siskiyou, sir, if this hand, which has grasped that of the gifted Prentice and the lamented Poe, should not have been honored by the touch of the godlike Chubbuck. Gentlemen, American literature is looking up. Thank you! I will take sugar in mine." It was "Boston" who indited letters of congratulations from H. W. Longfellow, Tennyson, and Browning to Mr. Chubbuck, deposited them in the Sierra Flat post-office, and obligingly consented to dictate the replies.

The simple faith and unaffected delight with which these manifestations were received by the poet and his patron might have touched the hearts of these grim masters of irony,

but for the sudden and equal development in both of the vanity of weak natures. Mr. McCorkle basked in the popularity of his protégé, and became alternately supercilious or patronizing toward the dwellers of Sierra Flat; while the poet, with hair carefully oiled and curled, and bedecked with cheap jewelry and flaunting neck-handkerchief, paraded himself before the single hotel. As may be imagined, this new disclosure of weakness afforded intense satisfaction to Sierra Flat, gave another lease of popularity to the poet, and suggested another idea to the facetious "Boston."

At that time a young lady popularly and professionally known as the "California Pet" was performing to enthusiastic audiences in the interior. Her specialty lay in the personation of youthful masculine character; as a *gamin* of the street she was irresistible, as a negro-dancer she carried the honest miner's heart by storm. A saucy, pretty brunette, she had preserved a wonderful moral reputation even under the Jove-like advances of showers of gold that greeted her appearance on the stage at Sierra Flat. A prominent and delighted member of that audience was Milton Chubbuck. He attended every night. Every day he lingered at the door of the Union Hotel for a glimpse of the "California Pet." It was not long before he received a note from her, — in "Boston's" most popular and approved female hand, — acknowledging his admiration. It was not long before "Boston" was called upon to indite a suitable reply. At last, in furtherance of his facetious design, it became necessary for "Boston" to call upon the young actress herself and secure her personal participation. To her he unfolded a plan, the successful carrying out of which he felt would secure his fame to posterity as a practical humorist. The "California Pet's" black eyes sparkled approvingly and mischievously. She only stipulated that she should see the man first, — a concession to her feminine weakness which years of dancing Juba and wearing trousers and boots had

not wholly eradicated from her willful breast. By all means, it should be done. And the interview was arranged for the next week.

It must not be supposed that during this interval of popularity Mr. Chubbuck had been unmindful of his poetic qualities. A certain portion of each day he was absent from town, — "a-communin' with natur'," as Mr. McCorkle expressed it, — and actually wandering in the mountain trails, or lying on his back under the trees, or gathering fragrant herbs and the bright-colored berries of the Manzanita. These and his company he generally brought to the editor's office late in the afternoon, often to that enterprising journalist's infinite weariness. Quiet and uncommunicative, he would sit there patiently watching him at his work until the hour for closing the office arrived, when he would as quietly depart. There was something so humble and unobtrusive in these visits, that the editor could not find it in his heart to deny them, and accepting them, like the woodpeckers, as a part of his sylvan surroundings, often forgot even his presence. Once or twice, moved by some beauty of expression in the moist, shy eyes, he felt like seriously admonishing his visitor of his idle folly; but his glance falling upon the oiled hair and the gorgeous necktie he invariably thought better of it. The case was evidently hopeless.

The interview between Mr. Chubbuck and the "California Pet" took place in a private room of the Union Hotel; propriety being respected by the presence of that arch-humorist, "Boston." To this gentleman we are indebted for the only true account of the meeting. However reticent Mr. Chubbuck might have been in the presence of his own sex, toward the fairer portion of humanity he was, like most poets, exceedingly voluble. Accustomed as the "California Pet" had been to excessive compliment, she was fairly embarrassed by the extravagant praises of he

visitor. Her personation of boy characters, her dancing of the "champion jig," were particularly dwelt upon with fervid but unmistakable admiration. At last, recovering her audacity and emboldened by the presence of "Boston," the "California Pet" electrified her hearers by demanding, half jestingly, half viciously, if it were as a boy or a girl that she was the subject of his flattering admiration.

"That knocked him out o' time," said the delighted "Boston," in his subsequent account of the interview. "But do you believe the d—d fool actually asked her to take him with her; wanted to engage in the company."

The plan, as briefly unfolded by "Boston," was to prevail upon Mr. Chubbuck to make his appearance in costume (already designed and prepared by the inventor) before a Sierra Flat audience, and recite an original poem at the Hall immediately on the conclusion of the "California Pet's" performance. At a given signal the audience were to rise and deliver a volley of unsavory articles (previously provided by the originator of the scheme); then a select few were to rush on the stage, seize the poet, and, after marching him in triumphal procession through the town, were to deposit him beyond its uttermost limits, with strict injunctions never to enter it again. To the first part of the plan the poet was committed; for the latter portion it was easy enough to find participants.

The eventful night came, and with it an audience that packed the long narrow room with one dense mass of human beings. The "California Pet" never had been so joyous, so reckless, so fascinating and audacious before. But the applause was tame and weak compared to the ironical outburst that greeted the second rising of the curtain and the entrance of the born poet of Sierra Flat. Then there was a hush of expectancy, and the poet stepped to the footlights and stood with his manuscript in his hand.

His face was deadly pale. Either there was some sug-

gestion of his fate in the faces of his audience, or some mysterious instinct told him of his danger. He attempted to speak, but faltered, tottered, and staggered to the wings.

Fearful of losing his prey, "Boston" gave the signal and leaped upon the stage. But at the same moment a light figure darted from behind the scenes, and delivering a kick that sent the discomfited humorist back among the musicians, cut a pigeon-wing, executed a double-shuffle, and then advancing to the footlights with that inimitable look, that audacious swagger and utter abandon which had so thrilled and fascinated them a moment before, uttered the characteristic speech, "Wot are you goin' to hit a man fur when he 's down, s-a-a-y ?"

The look, the drawl, the action, the readiness, and above all the downright courage of the little woman, had an effect. A roar of sympathetic applause followed the act. "Cut and run while you can," she whispered hurriedly over her one shoulder, without altering the other's attitude of pert and saucy defiance toward the audience. But even as she spoke, the poet tottered and sank fainting upon the stage. Then she threw a despairing whisper behind the scenes, "Ring down the curtain."

There was a slight movement of opposition in the audience, but among them rose the burly shoulders of Yuba Bill, the tall, erect figure of Henry York, of Sandy Bar, and the colorless, determined face of John Oakhurst. The curtain came down.

Behind it knelt the "California Pet" beside the prostrate poet. "Bring me some water. Run for a doctor. Stop!! CLEAR OUT, ALL OF YOU!"

She had unloosed the gaudy cravat and opened the shirt-collar of the insensible figure before her. Then she burst into an hysterical laugh.

"Manuela!"

Her tiring-woman, a Mexican half-breed, came toward her.

"Help me with him to my dressing-room, quick; then stand outside and wait. If any one questions you, tell them he's gone. Do you hear? HE's gone."

The old woman did as she was bade. In a few moments the audience had departed. Before morning so also had the "California Pet," Manuela, and the poet of Sierra Flat.

But, alas! with them also had departed the fair fame of the "California Pet." Only a few, and these, it is to be feared, of not the best moral character themselves, still had faith in the stainless honor of their favorite actress. "It was a mighty foolish thing to do, but it'll all come out right yet." On the other hand, a majority gave her full credit and approbation for her undoubted pluck and gallantry, but deplored that she should have thrown it away upon a worthless object. To elect for a lover the despised and ridiculed vagrant of Sierra Flat, who had not even the manliness to stand up in his own defense, was not only evidence of inherent moral depravity, but was an insult to the community. Colonel Starbottle saw in it only another instance of extreme frailty of the sex; he had known similar cases; and remembered distinctly, sir, how a well known Philadelphia heiress, one of the finest women that ever rode in her kerridge, that, gad, sir! had thrown over a Southern member of Congress to consort with a d—d nigger. The Colonel had also noticed a singular look in the dog's eye which he did not entirely fancy. He would not say anything against the lady, sir, but he had noticed—And here, haply, the Colonel became so mysterious and darkly confidential as to be unintelligible and inaudible to the bystanders.

A few days after the disappearance of Mr. Chubbuck a singular report reached Sierra Flat, and it was noticed that "Boston," who since the failure of his elaborate joke had been even more depressed in spirits than is habitual with

great humorists, suddenly found that his presence was required in San Francisco. But as yet nothing but the vaguest surmises were afloat, and nothing definite was known.

It was a pleasant afternoon when the editor of the "Sierra Flat Record" looked up from his case and beheld the figure of Mr. Morgan McCorkle standing in the doorway. There was a distressed look on the face of that worthy gentleman that at once enlisted the editor's sympathizing attention. He held an open letter in his hand as he advanced toward the middle of the room.

"As a man as has allers borne a fair reputation," began Mr. McCorkle slowly, "I should like, if so be as I could, Mister Editor, to make a correction in the columns of your valooable paper."

Mr. Editor begged him to proceed.

"Ye may not disremember that about a month ago I fetched here what so be as we'll call a young man whose name might be as it were Milton — Milton Chubbuck."

Mr. Editor remembered perfectly.

"Thet same party I'd knowed better nor fower year, two on 'em campin' out together. Not that I'd known him all the time, fur he war shy and strange at spells, and had odd ways that I took war nat'ral to a borned poet. Ye may remember that I said he was a borned poet?"

The editor distinctly did.

"I picked this same party up in St. Jo., taking a fancy to his face, and kinder calklating he'd runned away from home; for I'm a married man, Mr. Editor, and hev children of my own, — and thinkin' belike he was a borned poet."

"Well," said the editor.

"And as I said before, I should like now to make a correction in the columns of your valooable paper."

"What correction?" asked the editor.

"I said, ef you remember my words, as how he was a borned poet."

"Yes."

"From statements in this yer letter it seems as how I war wrong."

"Well?"

"She war a woman."

THE PRINCESS BOB AND HER FRIENDS

She was a Klamath Indian. Her title was, I think, a compromise between her claim as daughter of a chief and gratitude to her earliest white protector, whose name, after the Indian fashion, she had adopted. "Bob" Walker had taken her from the breast of her dead mother at a time when the sincere volunteer soldiery of the California frontier were impressed with the belief that extermination was the manifest destiny of the Indian race. He had with difficulty restrained the noble zeal of his compatriots long enough to convince them that the exemption of one Indian baby would not invalidate this theory. And he took her to his home, a pastoral clearing on the banks of the Salmon River, where she was cared for after a frontier fashion.

Before she was nine years old, she had exhausted the scant kindliness of the thin, overworked Mrs. Walker. As a playfellow of the young Walkers she was unreliable; as a nurse for the baby she was inefficient. She lost the former in the trackless depths of a redwood forest; she basely abandoned the latter in an extemporized cradle, hanging like a chrysalis to a convenient bough. She lied and she stole, — two unpardonable sins in a frontier community, where truth was a necessity and provisions were the only property. Worse than this, the outskirts of the clearing were sometimes haunted by blanketed tatterdemalions with whom she had mysterious confidences. Mr. Walker more than once regretted his indiscreet humanity; but she presently relieved him of responsibility, and possibly of blood-guiltiness, by disappearing entirely.

When she reappeared, it was at the adjacent village of Logport, in the capacity of housemaid to a trader's wife, who, joining some little culture to considerable conscientiousness, attempted to instruct her charge. But the Princess proved an unsatisfactory pupil to even so liberal a teacher. She accepted the alphabet with great good-humor, but always as a pleasing and recurring novelty, in which all interest expired at the completion of each lesson. She found a thousand uses for her books and writing materials other than those known to civilized children. She made a curious necklace of bits of slate pencil; she constructed a miniature canoe from the pasteboard covers of her primer; she bent her pens into fish-hooks, and tattooed the faces of her younger companions with blue ink. Religious instruction she received as good-humoredly, and learned to pronounce the name of the Deity with a cheerful familiarity that shocked her preceptress. Nor could her reverence be reached through analogy; she knew nothing of the Great Spirit, and professed entire ignorance of the Happy Hunting Grounds. Yet she attended divine service regularly, and as regularly asked for a hymn-book; and it was only through the discovery that she had collected twenty-five of these volumes and had hidden them behind the woodpile, that her connection with the First Baptist Church of Logport ceased. She would occasionally abandon these civilized and Christian privileges, and disappear from her home, returning after several days of absence with an odor of bark and fish, and a peace-offering to her mistress in the shape of venison or game.

To add to her troubles, she was now fourteen, and, according to the laws of her race, a woman. I do not think the most romantic fancy would have called her pretty. Her complexion defied most of those ambiguous similes through which poets unconsciously apologize for any deviation from the Caucasian standard. It was not wine nor

amber colored; if anything, it was smoky. Her face was tattooed with red and white lines on one cheek, as if a fine-toothed comb had been drawn from cheekbone to jaw, and, but for the good-humor that beamed from her small berry-like eyes and shone in her white teeth, would have been repulsive. She was short and stout. In her scant drapery and unrestrained freedom she was hardly statuesque, and her more unstudied attitudes were marred by a simian habit of softly scratching her left ankle with the toes of her right foot in moments of contemplation.

I think I have already shown enough to indicate the incongruity of her existence with even the low standard of civilization that obtained at Logport in the year 1860. It needed but one more fact to prove the far-sighted political sagacity and prophetic ethics of those sincere advocates of extermination, to whose virtues I have done but scant justice in the beginning of this article. This fact was presently furnished by the Princess. After one of her periodical disappearances, — this time unusually prolonged, — she astonished Logport by returning with a half-breed baby of a week old in her arms. That night a meeting of the hard-featured serious matrons of Logport was held at Mrs. Brown's. The immediate banishment of the Princess was demanded. Soft-hearted Mrs. Brown endeavored vainly to get a mitigation or suspension of the sentence. But, as on a former occasion, the Princess took matters into her own hands. A few mornings afterwards, a wicker cradle containing an Indian baby was found hanging on the handle of the door of the First Baptist Church. It was the Parthian arrow of the flying Princess. From that day Logport knew her no more.

It had been a bright clear day on the upland, so clear that the ramparts of Fort Jackson and the flagstaff were plainly visible twelve miles away from the long, curving

peninsula that stretched a bared white arm around the peaceful waters of Logport Bay. It had been a clear day upon the seashore, albeit the air was filled with the flying spume and shifting sand of a straggling beach, whose low dunes were dragged down by the long surges of the Pacific and thrown up again by the tumultuous trade-winds. But the sun had gone down in a bank of fleecy fog that was beginning to roll in upon the beach. Gradually the headland at the entrance of the harbor and the lighthouse disappeared, then the willow fringe that marked the line of Salmon River vanished, and the ocean was gone. A few sails still gleamed on the waters of the bay; but the advancing fog wiped them out one by one, crept across the steel-blue expanse, swallowed up the white mills and single spire of Logport, and, joining with reinforcements from the marshes, moved solemnly upon the hills. Ten minutes more and the landscape was utterly blotted out; simultaneously the wind died away and a death-like silence stole over sea and shore. The faint clang, high overhead, of unseen brant, the nearer call of invisible plover, the lap and wash of undistinguishable waters, and the monotonous roll of the vanished ocean, were the only sounds. As night deepened, the far-off booming of the fog-bell on the headland at intervals stirred the thick air.

Hard by the shore of the bay, and half hidden by a drifting sandhill, stood a low, nondescript structure, to whose composition sea and shore had equally contributed. It was built partly of logs and partly of driftwood and tarred canvas. Joined to one end of the main building — the ordinary log-cabin of the settler — was the half-round pilot-house of some wrecked steamer, while the other gable terminated in half of a broken whaleboat. Nailed against the boat were the dried skins of wild animals, and scattered about lay the flotsam and jetsam of many years' gathering, — bamboo crates, casks, hatches, blocks, oars, boxes part

of a whale's vertebræ, and the blades of swordfish. Drawn up on the beach of a little cove before the house lay a canoe. As the night thickened and the fog grew more dense, these details grew imperceptible, and only the windows of the pilot-house, lit up by a roaring fire within the hut, gleamed redly through the mist.

By this fire, beneath a ship's lamp that swung from the roof, two figures were seated, a man and a woman. The man, broad-shouldered and heavily bearded, stretched his listless powerful length beyond a broken bamboo chair with his eyes fixed on the fire. The woman crouched cross-legged upon the broad earthen hearth, with her eyes blinkingly fixed on her companion. They were small, black, round, berry-like eyes, and as the firelight shone upon her smoky face, with its one striped cheek of gorgeous brilliancy, it was plainly the Princess Bob and no other.

Not a word was spoken. They had been sitting thus for more than an hour, and there was about their attitude a suggestion that silence was habitual. Once or twice the man rose and walked up and down the narrow room, or gazed absently from the windows of the pilot-house, but never by look or sign betrayed the slightest consciousness of his companion. At such times the Princess from her nest by the fire followed him with eyes of canine expectancy and wistfulness. But he would as inevitably return to his contemplation of the fire, and the Princess to her blinking watchfulness of his face.

They had sat there silent and undisturbed for many an evening in fair weather and foul. They had spent many a day in sunshine and storm, gathering the unclaimed spoil of sea and shore. They had kept these mute relations, varied only by the incidents of the hunt or meagre household duties, for three years, ever since the man, wandering moodily over the lonely sands, had fallen upon the half-starved woman lying in the little hollow where she had

crawled to die. It had seemed as if they would never be disturbed, until now, when the Princess started, and, with the instinct of her race, bent her ear to the ground.

The wind had risen and was rattling the tarred canvas. But in another moment there plainly came from without the hut the sound of voices. Then followed a rap at the door; then another rap; and then, before they could rise to their feet, the door was flung briskly open.

"I beg your pardon," said a pleasant but somewhat decided contralto voice, "but I don't think you heard me knock. Ah! I see you did not. May I come in?"

There was no reply. Had the battered figurehead of the Goddess of Liberty, which lay deeply embedded in the sand on the beach, suddenly appeared at the door demanding admittance, the occupants of the cabin could not have been more speechlessly and hopelessly astonished than at the form which stood in the open doorway.

It was that of a slim, shapely, elegantly dressed young woman. A scarlet-lined silken hood was half thrown back from the shining mass of the black hair that covered her small head; from her pretty shoulders dropped a fur cloak, only restrained by a cord and tassel in her small gloved hand. Around her full throat was a double necklace of large white beads, that by some cunning feminine trick relieved with its infantile suggestion the strong decision of her lower face.

"Did you say yes? Ah! thank you. We may come in, Barker." (Here a shadow in a blue army overcoat followed her into the cabin, touched its cap respectfully, and then stood silent and erect against the wall.) "Don't disturb yourself in the least, I beg. What a distressingly unpleasant night! Is this your usual climate?"

Half graciously, half absently overlooking the still embarrassed silence of the group, she went on: "We started from the fort over three hours ago, — three hours

ago, was n't it, Barker ? " — (the erect Barker touched his cap) — " to go to Captain Emmons's quarters on Indian Island, — I think you call it Indian Island, don't you ? " — (she was appealing to the awe-stricken Princess) — " and we got into the fog and lost our way ; that is, Barker lost his way " — (Barker touched his cap deprecatingly) — " and goodness knows where we did n't wander to until we mistook your light for the lighthouse and pulled up here. No, no, pray keep your seat, do ! Really, I must insist."

Nothing could exceed the languid grace of the latter part of this speech, — nothing except the easy unconsciousness with which she glided by the offered chair of her stammering, embarrassed host, and stood beside the open hearth.

" Barker will tell you," she continued, warming her feet by the fire, " that I am Miss Portfire, daughter of Major Portfire, commanding the post. Ah, excuse me, child ! " (She had accidentally trodden upon the bare yellow toes of the Princess.) " Really, I did not know you were there. I am very near-sighted." (In confirmation of her statement, she put to her eyes a dainty double eyeglass that dangled from her neck.) " It 's a shocking thing to be near-sighted, is n't it ? "

If the shamefaced uneasy man to whom this remark was addressed could have found words to utter the thought that even in his confusion struggled uppermost in his mind, he would, looking at the bold, dark eyes that questioned him, have denied the fact. But he only stammered, " Yes." The next moment, however, Miss Portfire had apparently forgotten him and was examining the Princess through her glass.

" And what is your name, child ? "

The Princess, beatified by the eyes and eyeglass, showed all her white teeth at once, and softly scratched her leg.

" Bob."

"Bob? What a singular name!"

Miss Portfire's host here hastened to explain the origin of the Princess's title.

"Then *you* are Bob." (Eyeglass.)

"No, my name is Grey, — John Grey." And he actually achieved a bow where awkwardness was rather the air of imperfectly recalling a forgotten habit.

"Grey? — ah! let me see. Yes, certainly. You are Mr. Grey, the recluse, the hermit, the philosopher, and all that sort of thing. Why, certainly, Dr. Jones, our surgeon, has told me all about you. Dear me, how interesting a *rencontre!* Lived all alone here for seven — was it seven years? — yes, I remember now. Existed quite *au naturel*, one might say. How odd! Not that I know anything about that sort of thing, you know. I've lived always among people, and am really quite a stranger, I assure you. But honestly, Mr. — I beg your pardon — Mr. Grey, how do you like it?"

She had quietly taken his chair and thrown her cloak and hood over its back, and was now thoughtfully removing her gloves. Whatever were the arguments, — and they were doubtless many and profound, — whatever the experience, — and it was doubtless hard and satisfying enough, — by which this unfortunate man had justified his life for the last seven years, somehow they suddenly became trivial and terribly ridiculous before this simple but practical question.

"Well, you shall tell me all about it after you have given me something to eat. We will have time enough; Barker cannot find his way back in this fog to-night. Now don't put yourselves to any trouble on my account. Barker will assist."

Barker came forward. Glad to escape the scrutiny of his guest, the hermit gave a few rapid directions to the Princess in her native tongue, and disappeared in the shed.

Left a moment alone, Miss Portfire took a quick, half-audible, feminine inventory of the cabin. "Books, guns, skins, *one* chair, *one* bed, no pictures, and no looking-glass!" She took a book from the swinging shelf and resumed her seat by the fire as the Princess reëntered with fresh fuel. But while kneeling on the hearth the Princess chanced to look up, and met Miss Portfire's dark eyes over the edge of her book.

"Bob!"

The Princess showed her teeth.

"Listen! Would you like to have fine clothes, rings, and beads like these, to have your hair nicely combed and put up so? Would you?"

The Princess nodded violently.

"Would you like to live with me and have them? Answer quickly. Don't look round for *him*. Speak for yourself. Would you? Hush! never mind now."

The hermit reëntered, and the Princess, blinking, retreated into the shadow of the whaleboat shed, from which she did not emerge even when the homely repast of cold venison, ship-biscuit, and tea was served. Miss Portfire noticed her absence. "You really must not let me interfere with your usual simple ways. Do you know this is exceedingly interesting to me, so pastoral and patriarchal, and all that sort of thing. I must insist upon the Princess coming back; really I must."

But the Princess was not to be found in the shed, and Miss Portfire, who the next minute seemed to have forgotten all about her, took her place in the single chair before an extemporized table. Barker stood behind her, and the hermit leaned against the fireplace. Miss Portfire's appetite did not come up to her protestations. For the first time in seven years it occurred to the hermit that his ordinary victual might be improved. He stammered out something to that effect.

"I have eaten better and worse," said Miss Portfire quietly.

"But I thought you — that is, you said" —

"I spent a year in the hospitals, when father was on the Potomac," returned Miss Portfire composedly. After a pause she continued: "You remember after the second Bull Run — but, dear me! I beg your pardon; of course you know nothing about the war, and all that sort of thing, and don't care." (She put up her eyeglass and quietly surveyed his broad, muscular figure against the chimney.) "Or perhaps your prejudices — but then, as a hermit, you know, you have no politics, of course. Please don't let me bore you."

To have been strictly consistent, the hermit should have exhibited no interest in this topic. Perhaps it was owing to some quality in the narrator, but he was constrained to beg her to continue in such phrases as his unfamiliar lips could command. So that, little by little, Miss Portfire yielded up incident and personal observation of the contest then raging; with the same half-abstracted, half-unconcerned air that seemed habitual to her, she told the stories of privation, of suffering, of endurance, and of sacrifice. With the same assumption of timid deference that concealed her great self-control, she talked of principles and rights. Apparently without enthusiasm and without effort, of which his morbid nature would have been suspicious, she sang the great American Iliad in a way that stirred the depths of her solitary auditor to its massive foundations. Then she stopped and asked quietly, "Where is Bob?"

The hermit started. He would look for her. But Bob, for some reason, was not forthcoming. Search was made within and without the hut, but in vain. For the first time that evening Miss Portfire showed some anxiety. "Go," she said to Barker, "and find her. She *must* be found; stay, give me your overcoat, I 'll go myself." She

threw the overcoat over her shoulders and stepped out into the night. In the thick veil of fog that seemed suddenly to enwrap her, she stood for a moment irresolute, and then walked toward the beach, guided by the low wash of waters on the sand. She had not taken many steps before she stumbled over some dark, crouching object. Reaching down her hand, she felt the coarse, wiry mane of the Princess.

"Bob!"

There was no reply.

"Bob. I've been looking for you, come."

"Go 'way."

"Nonsense, Bob. I want you to stay with me to-night, come."

"Injin squaw no good for waugee woman. Go 'way."

"Listen, Bob. You are daughter of a chief: so am I. Your father had many warriors: so has mine. It is good that you stay with me. Come."

The Princess chuckled and suffered herself to be lifted up. A few moments later and they reëntered the hut, hand in hand.

With the first red streaks of dawn the next day the erect Barker touched his cap at the door of the hut. Beside him stood the hermit, also just risen from his blanketed nest in the sand. Forth from the hut, fresh as the morning air, stepped Miss Portfire, leading the Princess by the hand. Hand in hand also they walked to the shore, and when the Princess had been safely bestowed in the stern sheets, Miss Portfire turned and held out her own to her late host.

"I shall take the best of care of her, of course. You will come and see her often. I should ask you to come and see me, but you are a hermit, you know, and all that sort of thing. But if it's the correct anchorite thing, and can be done, my father will be glad to requite you for this night's hospitality. But don't do anything on my account that interferes with your simple habits. Good-by."

She handed him a card, which he took mechanically.

"Good-by."

The sail was hoisted, and the boat shoved off. As the fresh morning breeze caught the white canvas it seemed to bow a parting salutation. There was a rosy flush of promise on the water, and as the light craft darted forward toward the ascending sun, it seemed for a moment uplifted in its glory.

Miss Portfire kept her word. If thoughtful care and intelligent kindness could regenerate the Princess, her future was secure. And it really seemed as if she were for the first time inclined to heed the lessons of civilization, and profit by her new condition. An agreeable change was first noticed in her appearance. Her lawless hair was caught in a net, and no longer strayed over her low forehead. Her unstable bust was stayed and upheld by French corsets; her plantigrade shuffle was limited by heeled boots. Her dresses were neat and clean, and she wore a double necklace of glass beads With this physical improvement there also seemed some moral awakening. She no longer stole nor lied. With the possession of personal property came a respect for that of others. With increased dependence on the word of those about her came a thoughtful consideration of her own. Intellectually she was still feeble, although she grappled sturdily with the simple lessons which Miss Portfire set before her. But her zeal and simple vanity outran her discretion, and she would often sit for hours with an open book before her, which she could not read. She was a favorite with the officers at the fort, from the Major, who shared his daughter's prejudices and often yielded to her powerful self-will, to the subalterns, who liked her none the less that their natural enemies, the frontier volunteers, had declared war against her helpless sisterhood. The only restraint put upon her was the limitation of her liberty to

the inclosure of the fort and parade; and only once did she break this parole, and was stopped by the sentry as she stepped into a boat at the landing.

The recluse did not avail himself of Miss Portfire's invitation. But after the departure of the Princess he spent less of his time in the hut, and was more frequently seen in the distant marshes of Eel River and on the upland hills. A feverish restlessness, quite opposed to his usual phlegm, led him into singular freaks strangely inconsistent with his usual habits and reputation. The purser of the occasional steamer which stopped at Logport with the mails reported to have been boarded, just inside the bar, by a strange, bearded man, who asked for a newspaper containing the last war telegrams. He tore his red shirt into narrow strips, and spent two days with his needle over the pieces and the tattered remnant of his only white garment; and a few days afterward the fishermen on the bay were surprised to see what, on nearer approach, proved to be a rude imitation of the national flag floating from a spar above the hut.

One evening, as the fog began to drift over the sand-hills, the recluse sat alone in his hut. The fire was dying unheeded on the hearth, for he had been sitting there for a long time, completely absorbed in the blurred pages of an old newspaper. Presently he arose, and, refolding it, — an operation of great care and delicacy in its tattered condition, — placed it under the blankets of his bed. He resumed his seat by the fire, but soon began drumming with his fingers on the arm of his chair. Eventually this assumed the time and accent of some air. Then he began to whistle softly and hesitatingly, as if trying to recall a forgotten tune. Finally this took shape in a rude resemblance, not unlike that which his flag bore to the national standard, to Yankee Doodle. Suddenly he stopped.

There was an unmistakable rapping at the door. The blood which had at first rushed to his face now forsook it

and settled slowly around his heart. He tried to rise, but could not. Then the door was flung open, and a figure with a scarlet-lined hood and fur mantle stood on the threshold. With a mighty effort he took one stride to the door. The next moment he saw the wide mouth and white teeth of the Princess, and was greeted by a kiss that felt like a baptism.

To tear the hood and mantle from her figure in the sudden fury that seized him, and to fiercely demand the reason of this masquerade, was his only return to her greeting. "Why are you here? did you steal these garments?" he again demanded in her guttural language, as he shook her roughly by the arm. The Princess hung her head. "Did you?" he screamed, as he reached wildly for his rifle.

"I did."

His hold relaxed, and he staggered back against the wall. The Princess began to whimper. Between her sobs, she was trying to explain that the Major and his daughter were going away, and that they wanted to send her to the Reservation; but he cut her short. "Take off those things!" The Princess tremblingly obeyed. He rolled them up, placed them in the canoe she had just left, and then leaped into the frail craft. She would have followed, but with a great oath he threw her from him, and with one stroke of his paddle swept out into the fog, and was gone.

"Jessamy," said the Major, a few days after, as he sat at dinner with his daughter, "I think I can tell you something to match the mysterious disappearance and return of your wardrobe. Your crazy friend, the recluse, has enlisted this morning in the Fourth Artillery. He's a splendid-looking animal, and there's the right stuff for a soldier in him, if I'm not mistaken. He's in earnest too, for he enlists in the regiment ordered back to Washington. Bless

me, child, another goblet broken! you'll ruin the mess in glassware, at this rate."

"Have you heard anything more of the Princess, papa?"

"Nothing; but perhaps it's as well that she has gone. These cursed settlers are at their old complaints again about what they call 'Indian depredations,' and I have just received orders from headquarters to keep the settlement clear of all vagabond aborigines. I am afraid, my dear, that a strict construction of the term would include your protégée."

The time for the departure of the Fourth Artillery had come. The night before was thick and foggy. At one o'clock a shot on the ramparts called out the guard and roused the sleeping garrison. The new sentry, Private Grey, had challenged a dusky figure creeping on the glacis, and, receiving no answer, had fired. The guard sent out presently returned, bearing a lifeless figure in their arms. The new sentry's zeal, joined with an ex-frontiersman's aim, was fatal.

They laid the helpless, ragged form before the guard-house door, and then saw for the first time that it was the Princess. Presently she opened her eyes. They fell upon the agonized face of her innocent slayer, but haply without intelligence or reproach.

"Georgy!" she whispered.

"Bob!"

"All's same now. Me get plenty well soon. Me make no more fuss. Me go to Reservation."

Then she stopped, a tremor ran through her limbs, and she lay still. She had gone to the Reservation. Not that devised by the wisdom of man, but that one set apart from the foundation of the world, for the wisest as well as the meanest of His creatures.

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SIMPSON'S BAR.

It had been raining in the valley of the Sacramento. The North Fork had overflowed its banks, and Rattlesnake Creek was impassable. The few boulders that had marked the summer ford at Simpson's Crossing were obliterated by a vast sheet of water stretching to the foothills. The up-stage was stopped at Granger's; the last mail had been abandoned in the *tules*, the rider swimming for his life. "An area," remarked the "Sierra Avalanche," with pensive local pride, "as large as the State of Massachusetts is now under water."

Nor was the weather any better in the foothills. The mud lay deep on the mountain road; wagons that neither physical force nor moral objurgation could move from the evil ways into which they had fallen encumbered the track, and the way to Simpson's Bar was indicated by broken-down teams and hard swearing. And further on, cut off and inaccessible, rained upon and bedraggled, smitten by high winds and threatened by high water, Simpson's Bar, on the eve of Christmas Day, 1862, clung like a swallow's nest to the rocky entablature and splintered capitals of Table Mountain, and shook in the blast.

As night shut down on the settlement, a few lights gleamed through the mist from the windows of cabins on either side of the highway, now crossed and gullied by lawless streams and swept by marauding winds. Happily most of the population were gathered at Thompson's store, clustered around a redhot stove, at which they silently spat

in some accepted sense of social communion that perhaps rendered conversation unnecessary. Indeed, most methods of diversion had long since been exhausted on Simpson's Bar; high water had suspended the regular occupations on gulch and on river, and a consequent lack of money and whiskey had taken the zest from most illegitimate recreation. Even Mr. Hamlin was fain to leave the Bar with fifty dollars in his pocket — the only amount actually realized of the large sums won by him in the successful exercise of his arduous profession. "Ef I was asked," he remarked somewhat later, — "ef I was asked to pint out a purty little village where a retired sport as did n't care for money could exercise hisself, frequent and lively, I 'd say Simpson's Bar; but for a young man with a large family depending on his exertions, it don't pay." As Mr. Hamlin's family consisted mainly of female adults, this remark is quoted rather to show the breadth of his humor than the exact extent of his responsibilities.

Howbeit, the unconscious objects of this satire sat that evening in the listless apathy begotten of idleness and lack of excitement. Even the sudden splashing of hoofs before the door did not arouse them. Dick Bullen alone paused in the act of scraping out his pipe, and lifted his head, but no other one of the group indicated any interest in, or recognition of, the man who entered.

It was a figure familiar enough to the company, and known in Simpson's Bar as "The Old Man." A man of perhaps fifty years; grizzled and scant of hair, but still fresh and youthful of complexion. A face full of ready but not very powerful sympathy, with a chameleon-like aptitude for taking on the shade and color of contiguous moods and feelings. He had evidently just left some hilarious companions, and did not at first notice the gravity of the group, but clapped the shoulder of the nearest man jocularly, and threw himself into a vacant chair.

"Jest heard the best thing out, boys! Ye know Smiley, over yar — Jim Smiley — funniest man in the Bar? Well, Jim was jest telling the richest yarn about" —

"Smiley 's a —— fool," interrupted a gloomy voice.

"A particular —— skunk," added another in sepulchral accents.

A silence followed these positive statements. The Old Man glanced quickly around the group. Then his face slowly changed. "That 's so," he said reflectively, after a pause, "certainly a sort of a skunk and suthin' of a fool. In course." He was silent for a moment, as in painful contemplation of the unsavoriness and folly of the unpopular Smiley. "Dismal weather, ain't it?" he added, now fully embarked on the current of prevailing sentiment. "Mighty rough papers on the boys, and no show for money this season. And to-morrow 's Christmas."

There was a movement among the men at this announcement, but whether of satisfaction or disgust was not plain. "Yes," continued the Old Man in the lugubrious tone he had, within the last few moments, unconsciously adopted, — "yes, Christmas, and to-night 's Christmas Eve. Ye see, boys, I kinder thought — that is, I sorter had an idee, jest passin' like, you know — that maybe ye 'd all like to come over to my house to-night and have a sort of tear round. But I suppose, now, you would n't? Don't feel like it, maybe?" he added with anxious sympathy, peering into the faces of his companions.

"Well, I don't know," responded Tom Flynn with some cheerfulness. "P'r'aps we may. But how about your wife, Old Man? What does *she* say to it?"

The Old Man hesitated. His conjugal experience had not been a happy one, and the fact was known to Simpson's Bar. His first wife, a delicate, pretty little woman, had suffered keenly and secretly from the jealous suspicions of her husband, until one day he invited the whole Bar to his

house to expose her infidelity. On arriving, the party found the shy, petite creature quietly engaged in her household duties, and retired abashed and discomfited. But the sensitive woman did not easily recover from the shock of this extraordinary outrage. It was with difficulty she regained her equanimity sufficiently to release her lover from the closet in which he was concealed, and escape with him. She left a boy of three years to comfort her bereaved husband. The Old Man's present wife had been his cook. She was large, loyal, and aggressive.

Before he could reply, Joe Dimmick suggested with great directness that it was the "Old Man's house," and that, invoking the Divine Power, if the case were his own, he would invite whom he pleased, even if in so doing he imperiled his salvation. The Powers of Evil, he further remarked, should contend against him vainly. All this delivered with a terseness and vigor lost in this necessary translation.

"In course. Certainly. Thet 's it," said the Old Man with a sympathetic frown. "Thar 's no trouble about thet. It 's my own house, built every stick on it myself. Don't you be afeard o' her, boys. She *may* cut up a trifle rough — ez wimmin do — but she 'll come round." Secretly the Old Man trusted to the exaltation of liquor and the power of courageous example to sustain him in such an emergency.

As yet, Dick Bullen, the oracle and leader of Simpson's Bar, had not spoken. He now took his pipe from his lips. "Old Man, how 's that yer Johnny gettin' on? Seems to me he did n't look so peart last time I seed him on the bluff heavin' rocks at Chinamen. Did n't seem to take much interest in it. Thar was a gang of 'em by yar yesterday — drownded out up the river — and I kinder thought o' Johnny, and how he 'd miss 'em! Maybe now, we 'd be in the way ef he wus sick?"

The father, evidently touched not only by this pathetic picture of Johnny's deprivation, but by the considerate delicacy of the speaker, hastened to assure him that Johnny was better, and that a "little fun might 'liven him up." Whereupon Dick arose, shook himself, and saying, "I'm ready. Lead the way, Old Man: here goes," himself led the way with a leap, a characteristic howl, and darted out into the night. As he passed through the outer room he caught up a blazing brand from the hearth. The action was repeated by the rest of the party, closely following and elbowing each other, and before the astonished proprietor of Thompson's grocery was aware of the intention of his guests, the room was deserted.

The night was pitchy dark. In the first gust of wind their temporary torches were extinguished, and only the red brands dancing and flitting in the gloom like drunken will-o'-the-wisps indicated their whereabouts. Their way led up Pine-Tree Cañon, at the head of which a broad, low, bark-thatched cabin burrowed in the mountain-side. It was the home of the Old Man, and the entrance to the tunnel in which he worked when he worked at all. Here the crowd paused for a moment, out of delicate deference to their host, who came up panting in the rear.

"P'r'aps ye 'd better hold on a second out yer, whilst I go in and see that things is all right," said the Old Man, with an indifference he was far from feeling. The suggestion was graciously accepted, the door opened and closed on the host, and the crowd, leaning their backs against the wall and cowering under the eaves, waited and listened.

For a few moments there was no sound but the dripping of water from the eaves, and the stir and rustle of wrestling boughs above them. Then the men became uneasy, and whispered suggestion and suspicion passed from the one to the other. "Reckon she 's caved in his head the first lick!" "Decoyed him inter the tunnel and barred him

up, likely." "Got him down and sittin' on him." "Prob'ly biling suthin' to heave on us: stand clear the door, boys!" For just then the latch clicked, the door slowly opened, and a voice said, "Come in out o' the wet."

The voice was neither that of the Old Man nor of his wife. It was the voice of a small boy, its weak treble broken by that preternatural hoarseness which only vagabondage and the habit of premature self-assertion can give. It was the face of a small boy that looked up at theirs, — a face that might have been pretty, and even refined, but that it was darkened by evil knowledge from within, and dirt and hard experience from without. He had a blanket around his shoulders, and had evidently just risen from his bed. "Come in," he repeated, "and don't make no noise. The Old Man 's in there talking to mar," he continued, pointing to an adjacent room which seemed to be a kitchen, from which the Old Man's voice came in deprecating accents. "Let me be," he added querulously, to Dick Bullen, who had caught him up, blanket and all, and was affecting to toss him into the fire, "let go o' me, you d—d old fool, d' ye hear?"

Thus adjured, Dick Bullen lowered Johnny to the ground with a smothered laugh, while the men, entering quietly, ranged themselves around a long table of rough boards which occupied the centre of the room. Johnny then gravely proceeded to a cupboard and brought out several articles, which he deposited on the table. "Thar 's whiskey. And crackers. And red herons. And cheese." He took a bite of the latter on his way to the table. "And sugar." He scooped up a mouthful *en route* with a small and very dirty hand. "And terbacker. Thar 's dried appils too on the shelf, but I don't admire 'em. Appils is swellin'. Thar," he concluded, "now wade in, and don't be afeard. *I* don't mind the old woman. She don't b'long to *me*. S'long."

He had stepped to the threshold of a small room, scarcely larger than a closet, partitioned off from the main apartment, and holding in its dim recess a small bed. He stood there a moment looking at the company, his bare feet peeping from the blanket, and nodded.

"Hello, Johnny! You ain't goin' to turn in agin, are ye?" said Dick.

"Yes, I are," responded Johnny decidedly.

"Why, wot 's up, old fellow?"

"I 'm sick."

"How sick?"

"I 've got a fevier. And childblains. And roomatiz," returned Johnny, and vanished within. After a moment's pause, he added in the dark, apparently from under the bedclothes, — "And biles!"

There was an embarrassing silence. The men looked at each other and at the fire. Even with the appetizing banquet before them, it seemed as if they might again fall into the despondency of Thompson's grocery, when the voice of the Old Man, incautiously lifted, came deprecatingly from the kitchen.

"Certainly! Thet 's so. In course they is. A gang o' lazy, drunken loafers, and that ar Dick Bullen 's the ornariest of all. Did n't hev no more *sabe* than to come round yar with sickness in the house and no provision. Thet 's what I said: 'Bullen,' sez I, 'it 's crazy drunk you are, or a fool,' sez I, 'to think o' such a thing.' 'Staples,' I sez, 'be you a man, Staples, and 'spect to raise h—ll under my roof and invalids lyin' round?' But they would come, — they would. Thet 's wot you must 'spect o' such trash as lays round the Bar."

A burst of laughter from the men followed this unfortunate exposure. Whether it was overheard in the kitchen, or whether the Old Man's irate companion had just then exhausted all other modes of expressing her contemptuous

indignation, I cannot say, but a back door was suddenly slammed with great violence. A moment later and the Old Man reappeared, haply unconscious of the cause of the late hilarious outburst, and smiled blandly.

"The old woman thought she 'd jest run over to Mrs. MacFadden's for a sociable call," he explained with jaunty indifference, as he took a seat at the board.

Oddly enough it needed this untoward incident to relieve the embarrassment that was beginning to be felt by the party, and their natural audacity returned with their host. I do not propose to record the convivialities of that evening. The inquisitive reader will accept the statement that the conversation was characterized by the same intellectual exaltation, the same cautious reverence, the same fastidious delicacy, the same rhetorical precision, and the same logical and coherent discourse somewhat later in the evening, which distinguish similar gatherings of the masculine sex in more civilized localities and under more favorable auspices. No glasses were broken in the absence of any; no liquor was uselessly spilt on the floor or table in the scarcity of that article.

It was nearly midnight when the festivities were interrupted. "Hush," said Dick Bullen, holding up his hand. It was the querulous voice of Johnny from his adjacent closet: "O dad!"

The Old Man arose hurriedly and disappeared in the closet. Presently he reappeared. "His rheumatiz is coming on agin bad," he explained, "and he wants rubbin'." He lifted the demijohn of whiskey from the table and shook it. It was empty. Dick Bullen put down his tin cup with an embarrassed laugh. So did the others. The Old Man examined their contents and said hopefully, "I reckon that 's enough; he don't need much. You hold on all o' you for a spell, and I 'll be back;" and vanished in the closet with an old flannel shirt and the whiskey. The

door closed but imperfectly, and the following dialogue was distinctly audible :

"Now, sonny, whar does she ache worst ? "

"Sometimes over yar and sometimes under yer ; but it 's most powerful from yer to yer. Rub yer, dad."

A silence seemed to indicate a brisk rubbing. Then Johnny :

"Hevin' a good time out yer, dad ? "

"Yes, sonny."

"To-morrer 's Chrismiss, — ain't it ? "

"Yes, sonny. How does she feel now ? "

"Better. Rub a little furder down. Wot 's Chrismiss, anyway ? Wot 's it all about ? "

"Oh, it 's a day."

This exhaustive definition was apparently satisfactory, for there was a silent interval of rubbing. Presently Johnny again :

"Mar sez that everywhere else but yer everybody gives things to everybody Chrismiss, and then she jist waded inter you. She sez thar 's a man they call Sandy Claws, not a white man, you know, but a kind o' Chinemin, comes down the chimbley night afore Chrismiss and gives things to chillern, — boys like me. Puts 'em in their butes ! Thet 's what she tried to play upon me. Easy now, pop, whar are you rubbin' to, — thet 's a mile from the place. She jest made that up, did n't she, jest to aggrewate me and you ? Don't rub thar. . . . Why, dad ! "

In the great quiet that seemed to have fallen upon the house the sigh of the near pines and the drip of leaves without was very distinct. Johnny's voice, too, was lowered as he went on, "Don't you take on now, for I 'm gettin' all right fast. Wot 's the boys doin' out thar ? "

The Old Man partly opened the door and peered through. His guests were sitting there sociably enough, and there were a few silver coins and a lean buckskin purse on the

table. "Bettin' on suthin' — some little game or 'nother. They 're all right," he replied to Johnny, and recommenced his rubbing.

"I 'd like to take a hand and win some money," said Johnny reflectively after a pause.

The Old Man glibly repeated what was evidently a familiar formula, that if Johnny would wait until he struck it rich in the tunnel he 'd have lots of money, etc., etc.

"Yes," said Johnny, "but you don't. And whether you strike it or I win it, it 's about the same. It 's all luck. But it 's mighty cur'o's about Chrismiss — ain't it? Why do they call it Chrismiss?"

Perhaps from some instinctive deference to the overhearing of his guests, or from some vague sense of incongruity, the Old Man's reply was so low as to be inaudible beyond the room.

"Yes," said Johnny, with some slight abatement of interest, "I 've heerd o' *him* before. Thar, that 'll do, dad. I don't ache near so bad as I did. Now wrap me tight in this yer blanket. So. Now," he added in a muffled whisper, "sit down yer by me till I go asleep." To assure himself of obedience, he disengaged one hand from the blanket, and, grasping his father's sleeve, again composed himself to rest.

For some moments the Old Man waited patiently. Then the unwonted stillness of the house excited his curiosity, and without moving from the bed he cautiously opened the door with his disengaged hand, and looked into the main room. To his infinite surprise it was dark and deserted. But even then a smouldering log on the hearth broke, and by the upspringing blaze he saw the figure of Dick Bullen sitting by the dying embers.

"Hello!"

Dick started, rose, and came somewhat unsteadily toward him.

"Whar 's the boys?" said the Old Man.

"Gone up the cañon on a little *pasear*. They 're coming back for me in a minit. I 'm waitin' round for 'em. What are you starin' at, Old Man?" he added, with a forced laugh; "do you think I 'm drunk?"

The Old Man might have been pardoned the supposition, for Dick's eyes were humid and his face flushed. He loitered and lounged back to the chimney, yawned, shook himself, buttoned up his coat and laughed. "Liquor ain't so plenty as that, Old Man. Now don't you git up," he continued, as the Old Man made a movement to release his sleeve from Johnny's hand. "Don't you mind manners. Sit jest whar you be; I 'm goin' in a jiffy. Thar, that 's them now."

There was a low tap at the door. Dick Bullen opened it quickly, nodded "Good-night" to his host, and disappeared. The Old Man would have followed him but for the hand that still unconsciously grasped his sleeve. He could have easily disengaged it: it was small, weak, and emaciated. But perhaps because it *was* small, weak, and emaciated he changed his mind, and, drawing his chair closer to the bed, rested his head upon it. In this defenseless attitude the potency of his earlier potations surprised him. The room flickered and faded before his eyes, reappeared, faded again, went out, and left him — asleep.

Meantime Dick Bullen, closing the door, confronted his companions. "Are you ready?" said Staples. "Ready," said Dick; "what 's the time?" "Past twelve," was the reply; "can you make it? — it 's nigh on fifty miles, the round trip hither and yon." "I reckon," returned Dick shortly. "Whar 's the mare?" "Bill and Jack 's holdin' her at the crossin'." "Let 'em hold on a minit longer," said Dick.

He turned and reëntered the house softly. By the light of the guttering candle and dying fire he saw that the door

of the little room was open. He stepped toward it on tiptoe and looked in. The Old Man had fallen back in his chair, snoring, his helpless feet thrust out in a line with his collapsed shoulders, and his hat pulled over his eyes. Beside him, on a narrow wooden bedstead, lay Johnny, muffled tightly in a blanket that hid all save a strip of forehead and a few curls damp with perspiration. Dick Bullen made a step forward, hesitated, and glanced over his shoulder into the deserted room. Everything was quiet. With a sudden resolution he parted his huge mustaches with both hands and stooped over the sleeping boy. But even as he did so a mischievous blast, lying in wait, swooped down the chimney, rekindled the hearth, and lit up the room with a shameless glow from which Dick fled in bashful terror.

His companions were already waiting for him at the crossing. Two of them were struggling in the darkness with some strange misshapen bulk, which as Dick came nearer took the semblance of a great yellow horse.

It was the mare. She was not a pretty picture. From her Roman nose to her rising haunches, from her arched spine hidden by the stiff *machillas* of a Mexican saddle, to her thick, straight bony legs, there was not a line of equine grace. In her half-blind but wholly vicious white eyes, in her protruding under-lip, in her monstrous color, there was nothing but ugliness and vice.

"Now then," said Staples, "stand cl'ar of her heels, boys, and up with you. Don't miss your first holt of her mane, and mind ye get your off stirrup *quick*. Ready!"

There was a leap, a scrambling struggle, a bound, a wild retreat of the crowd, a circle of flying hoofs, two springless leaps that jarred the earth, a rapid play and jingle of spurs, a plunge, and then the voice of Dick somewhere in the darkness. "All right!"

"Don't take the lower road back onless you're hard

pushed for time! Don't hold her in down hill We 'll be at the ford at five. G'lang! Hoopa! Mula! GO!"

A splash, a spark struck from the ledge in the road, a clatter in the rocky cut beyond, and Dick was gone.

. . . . . .

Sing, O Muse, the ride of Richard Bullen! Sing, O Muse, of chivalrous men! the sacred quest, the doughty deeds, the battery of low churls, the fearsome ride and gruesome perils of the Flower of Simpson's Bar! Alack! she is dainty, this Muse! She will have none of this bucking brute and swaggering, ragged rider, and I must fain follow him in prose, afoot!

It was one o'clock, and yet he had only gained Rattlesnake Hill. For in that time Jovita had rehearsed to him all her imperfections and practiced all her vices. Thrice had she stumbled. Twice had she thrown up her Roman nose in a straight line with the reins, and, resisting bit and spur, struck out madly across country. Twice had she reared, and, rearing, fallen backward; and twice had the agile Dick, unharmed, regained his seat before she found her vicious legs again. And a mile beyond them, at the foot of a long hill, was Rattlesnake Creek. Dick knew that here was the crucial test of his ability to perform his enterprise, set his teeth grimly, put his knees well into her flanks, and changed his defensive tactics to brisk aggression. Bullied and maddened, Jovita began the descent of the hill. Here the artful Richard pretended to hold her in with ostentatious objurgation and well-feigned cries of alarm. It is unnecessary to add that Jovita instantly ran away. Nor need I state the time made in the descent; it is written in the chronicles of Simpson's Bar. Enough that in another moment, as it seemed to Dick, she was splashing on the overflowed banks of Rattlesnake Creek. As Dick expected, the momentum she had acquired carried her beyond the point of balking, and, holding her well together for a

mighty leap, they dashed into the middle of the swiftly flowing current. A few moments of kicking, wading, and swimming, and Dick drew a long breath on the opposite bank.

The road from Rattlesnake Creek to Red Mountain was tolerably level. Either the plunge in Rattlesnake Creek had dampened her baleful fire, or the art which led to it had shown her the superior wickedness of her rider, for Jovita no longer wasted her surplus energy in wanton conceits. Once she bucked, but it was from force of habit; once she shied, but it was from a new, freshly painted meeting-house at the crossing of the county road. Hollows, ditches, gravelly deposits, patches of freshly springing grasses, flew from beneath her rattling hoofs. She began to smell unpleasantly, once or twice she coughed slightly, but there was no abatement of her strength or speed. By two o'clock he had passed Red Mountain and begun the descent to the plain. Ten minutes later the driver of the fast Pioneer coach was overtaken and passed by a "man on a Pinto hoss," — an event sufficiently notable for remark. At half past two Dick rose in his stirrups with a great shout. Stars were glittering through the rifted clouds, and beyond him, out of the plain, rose two spires, a flagstaff, and a straggling line of black objects. Dick jingled his spurs and swung his *riata*, Jovita bounded forward, and in another moment they swept into Tuttleville, and drew up before the wooden piazza of "The Hotel of All Nations."

What transpired that night at Tuttleville is not strictly a part of this record. Briefly I may state, however, that after Jovita had been handed over to a sleepy ostler, whom she at once kicked into unpleasant consciousness, Dick sallied out with the barkeeper for a tour of the sleeping town. Lights still gleamed from a few saloons and gambling-houses; but, avoiding these, they stopped before several closed shops, and by persistent tapping and judicious outcry roused the

proprietors from their beds, and made them unbar the doors of their magazines and expose their wares. Sometimes they were met by curses, but oftener by interest and some concern in their needs, and the interview was invariably concluded by a drink. It was three o'clock before this pleasantry was given over, and with a small waterproof bag of India-rubber strapped on his shoulders, Dick returned to the hotel. But here he was waylaid by Beauty, — Beauty opulent in charms, affluent in dress, persuasive in speech, and Spanish in accent! In vain she repeated the invitation in "Excelsior," happily scorned by all Alpine-climbing youth, and rejected by this child of the Sierras, — a rejection softened in this instance by a laugh and his last gold coin. And then he sprang to the saddle and dashed down the lonely street and out into the lonelier plain, where presently the lights, the black line of houses, the spires, and the flagstaff sank into the earth behind him again and were lost in the distance.

The storm had cleared away, the air was brisk and cold, the outlines of adjacent landmarks were distinct, but it was half-past four before Dick reached the meeting-house and the crossing of the county road. To avoid the rising grade he had taken a longer and more circuitous road, in whose viscid mud Jovita sank fetlock deep at every bound. It was a poor preparation for a steady ascent of five miles more; but Jovita, gathering her legs under her, took it with her usual blind, unreasoning fury, and a half-hour later reached the long level that led to Rattlesnake Creek. Another half-hour would bring him to the creek. He threw the reins lightly upon the neck of the mare, chirruped to her, and began to sing.

Suddenly Jovita shied with a bound that would have unseated a less practiced rider. Hanging to her rein was a figure that had leaped from the bank, and at the same time from the road before her arose a shadowy horse and rider.

"Throw up your hands," commanded the second apparition, with an oath.

Dick felt the mare tremble, quiver, and apparently sink under him. He knew what it meant and was prepared.

"Stand aside, Jack Simpson. I know you, you d—d thief! Let me pass, or" —

He did not finish the sentence. Jovita rose straight in the air with a terrific bound, throwing the figure from her bit with a single shake of her vicious head, and charged with deadly malevolence down on the impediment before her. An oath, a pistol-shot, horse and highwayman rolled over in the road, and the next moment Jovita was a hundred yards away. But the good right arm of her rider, shattered by a bullet, dropped helplessly at his side.

Without slacking his speed he shifted the reins to his left hand. But a few moments later he was obliged to halt and tighten the saddle-girths that had slipped in the onset. This in his crippled condition took some time. He had no fear of pursuit, but looking up he saw that the eastern stars were already paling, and that the distant peaks had lost their ghostly whiteness, and now stood out blackly against a lighter sky. Day was upon him. Then completely absorbed in a single idea, he forgot the pain of his wound, and mounting again dashed on toward Rattlesnake Creek. But now Jovita's breath came broken by gasps, Dick reeled in his saddle, and brighter and brighter grew the sky.

Ride, Richard; run, Jovita; linger, O day!

For the last few rods there was a roaring in his ears. Was it exhaustion from loss of blood, or what? He was dazed and giddy as he swept down the hill, and did not recognize his surroundings. Had he taken the wrong road, or was this Rattlesnake Creek?

It was. But the brawling creek he had swam a few hours before had risen, more than doubled its volume, and

now rolled a swift and resistless river between him and Rattlesnake Hill. For the first time that night Richard's heart sank within him. The river, the mountain, the quickening east, swam before his eyes. He shut them to recover his self-control. In that brief interval, by some fantastic mental process, the little room at Simpson's Bar and the figures of the sleeping father and son rose upon him. He opened his eyes wildly, cast off his coat, pistol, boots, and saddle, bound his precious pack tightly to his shoulders, grasped the bare flanks of Jovita with his bared knees, and with a shout dashed into the yellow water. A cry rose from the opposite bank as the head of a man and horse struggled for a few moments against the battling current, and then were swept away amidst uprooted trees and whirling driftwood.

. . . . . .

The Old Man started and woke. The fire on the hearth was dead, the candle in the outer room flickering in its socket, and somebody was rapping at the door. He opened it, but fell back with a cry before the dripping, half-naked figure that reeled against the doorpost.

"Dick?"

"Hush! Is he awake yet?"

"No; but, Dick" —

"Dry up, you old fool! Get me some whiskey, *quick!*" The Old Man flew and returned with — an empty bottle! Dick would have sworn, but his strength was not equal to the occasion. He staggered, caught at the handle of the door, and motioned to the Old Man.

"Thar 's suthin' in my pack yer for Johnny. Take it off. I can't."

The Old Man unstrapped the pack, and laid it before the exhausted man.

"Open it, quick."

He did so with trembling fingers. It contained only a

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few poor toys, — cheap and barbaric enough, goodness knows, but bright with paint and tinsel. One of them was broken; another, I fear, was irretrievably ruined by water, and on the third — ah me! there was a cruel spot.

"It don't look like much, that 's a fact," said Dick ruefully. . . . "But it 's the best we could do. . . . Take 'em, Old Man, and put 'em in his stocking, and tell him — tell him, you know — hold me, Old Man" — The Old Man caught at his sinking figure. "Tell him," said Dick, with a weak little laugh, — "tell him Sandy Claus has come."

And even so, bedraggled, ragged, unshaven and unshorn, with one arm hanging helplessly at his side, Santa Claus came to Simpson's Bar and fell fainting on the first threshold. The Christmas dawn came slowly after, touching the remoter peaks with the rosy warmth of ineffable love. And it looked so tenderly on Simpson's Bar that the whole mountain, as if caught in a generous action, blushed to the skies

MRS. SKAGGS'S HUSBANDS

PART I. — WEST

The sun was rising in the foothills. But for an hour the black mass of Sierra eastward of Angel's had been outlined with fire, and the conventional morning had come two hours before with the down coach from Placerville. The dry, cold, dewless California night still lingered in the long cañons and folded skirts of Table Mountain. Even on the mountain road the air was still sharp, and that urgent necessity for something to keep out the chill, which sent the barkeeper sleepily among his bottles and wine-glasses at the station, obtained all along the road.

Perhaps it might be said that the first stir of life was in the bar-rooms. A few birds twittered in the sycamores at the roadside, but long before that glasses had clicked and bottles gurgled in the saloon of the Mansion House. This was still lit by a dissipated looking hanging-lamp, which was evidently the worse for having been up all night, and bore a singular resemblance to a faded reveler of Angel's, who even then sputtered and flickered in *his* socket in an armchair below it, — a resemblance so plain that when the first level sunbeam pierced the window-pane, the barkeeper, moved by a sentiment of consistency and compassion, put them both out together.

Then the sun came up haughtily. When it had passed the eastern ridge it began, after its habit, to lord it over Angel's, sending the thermometer up twenty degrees in as many minutes, driving the mules to the sparse shade of corrals and fences, making the red dust incandescent, and

renewing its old imperious aggression on the spiked bosses of the convex shield of pines that defended Table Mountain. Thither by nine o'clock all coolness had retreated, and the "outsides" of the up stage plunged their hot faces in its aromatic shadows as in water.

It was the custom of the driver of the Wingdam coach to whip up his horses and enter Angel's at that remarkable pace which the woodcuts in the hotel bar-room represented to credulous humanity as the usual rate of speed of that conveyance. At such times the habitual expression of disdainful reticence and lazy official severity which he wore on the box became intensified as the loungers gathered about the vehicle, and only the boldest ventured to address him. It was the Hon. Judge Beeswinger, Member of Assembly, who to-day presumed, perhaps rashly, on the strength of his official position.

"Any political news from below, Bill?" he asked, as the latter slowly descended from his lofty perch, without, however, any perceptible coming down of mien or manner.

"Not much," said Bill, with deliberate gravity. "The President o' the United States hez n't bin hisself sens you refoosed that seat in the Cabinet. The ginral feelin' in perlitical circles is one o' regret."

Irony, even of this outrageous quality, was too common in Angel's to excite either a smile or a frown. Bill slowly entered the bar-room during a dry, dead silence, in which only a faint spirit of emulation survived.

"Ye did n't bring up that agint o' Rothschild's this trip?" asked the barkeeper slowly, by way of vague contribution to the prevailing tone of conversation.

"No," responded Bill, with thoughtful exactitude. "He said he could n't look inter that claim o' Johnson's without first consultin' the Bank o' England."

The Mr. Johnson here alluded to being present as the faded reveler the barkeeper had lately put out, and as the

alleged claim notoriously possessed no attractions whatever to capitalists, expectation naturally looked to him for some response to this evident challenge. He did so by simply stating that he would "take sugar" in his, and by walking unsteadily towards the bar, as if accepting a festive invitation. To the credit of Bill be it recorded that he did not attempt to correct the mistake, but gravely touched glasses with him, and after saying "Here's another nail in your coffin," — a cheerful sentiment, to which "And the hair all off your head" was playfully added by the others, — he threw off his liquor with a single dexterous movement of head and elbow, and stood refreshed.

"Hello, old major!" said Bill, suddenly setting down his glass. "Are *you* there?"

It was a boy, who, becoming bashfully conscious that this epithet was addressed to him, retreated sideways to the doorway, where he stood beating his hat against the doorpost with an assumption of indifference that his downcast but mirthful dark eyes and reddening cheek scarcely bore out. Perhaps it was owing to his size, perhaps it was to a certain cherubic outline of face and figure, perhaps to a peculiar trustfulness of expression, that he did not look half his age, which was really fourteen.

Everybody in Angel's knew the boy. Either under the venerable title bestowed by Bill, or as "Tom Islington," after his adopted father, his was a familiar presence in the settlement, and the theme of much local criticism and comment. His waywardness, indolence, and unaccountable amiability — a quality at once suspicious and gratuitous in a pioneer community like Angel's — had often been the subject of fierce discussion. A large and reputable majority believed him destined for the gallows; a minority not quite so reputable enjoyed his presence without troubling themselves much about his future; to one or two the evil predictions of the majority possessed neither novelty nor terror.

"Anything for me, Bill?" asked the boy half mechanically, with the air of repeating some jocular formulary perfectly understood by Bill.

"Anythin' for you!" echoed Bill, with an overacted severity equally well understood by Tommy, — "anythin' for you? No! And it 's my opinion there won't be anythin' for you ez long ez you hang around bar-rooms and spend your valooable time with loafers and bummers. Git!"

The reproof was accompanied by a suitable exaggeration of gesture (Bill had seized a decanter), before which the boy retreated still good-humoredly. Bill followed him to the door. "Dern my skin, if he hez n't gone off with that bummer Johnson," he added, as he looked down the road.

"What 's he expectin', Bill?" asked the barkeeper.

"A letter from his aunt. Reckon he 'll hev to take it out in expectin'. Likely they 're glad to get shut o' him."

"He 's leadin' a shiftless, idle life here," interposed the Member of Assembly.

"Well," said Bill, who never allowed any one but himself to abuse his protégé, "seein' he ain't expectin' no offis from the hands of an enlightened constitooency, it *is* raythor a shiftless life." After delivering this Parthian arrow with a gratuitous twanging of the bow to indicate its offensive personality, Bill winked at the barkeeper, slowly resumed a pair of immense, bulgy buckskin gloves, which gave his fingers the appearance of being painfully sore and bandaged, strode to the door without looking at anybody, called out, "All aboard," with a perfunctory air of supreme indifference whether the invitation was heeded, remounted his box, and drove stolidly away.

Perhaps it was well that he did so, for the conversation at once assumed a disrespectful attitude toward Tom and his relatives. It was more than intimated that Tom's alleged aunt was none other than Tom's real mother, while it was

also asserted that Tom's alleged uncle did not himself participate in this intimate relationship to the boy to an extent which the fastidious taste of Angel's deemed moral and necessary. Popular opinion also believed that Islington, the adopted father, who received a certain stipend ostensibly for the boy's support, retained it as a reward for his reticence regarding these facts. "He ain't ruinin' hisself by wastin' it on Tom," said the barkeeper, who possibly possessed positive knowledge of much of Islington's disbursements. But at this point exhausted nature languished among some of the debaters, and he turned from the frivolity of conversation to his severer professional duties.

It was also well that Bill's momentary attitude of didactic propriety was not further excited by the subsequent conduct of his protégé. For by this time Tom, half supporting the unstable Johnson, who developed a tendency to occasionally dash across the glaring road, but checked himself midway each time, reached the corral which adjoined the Mansion House. At its farther extremity was a pump and horse-trough. Here, without a word being spoken, but evidently in obedience to some habitual custom, Tom led his companion. With the boy's assistance, Johnson removed his coat and neckcloth, turned back the collar of his shirt, and gravely placed his head beneath the pump-spout. With equal gravity and deliberation, Tom took his place at the handle. For a few moments only the splashing of water and regular strokes of the pump broke the solemnly ludicrous silence. Then there was a pause in which Johnson put his hands to his dripping head, felt it critically as if it belonged to somebody else, and raised his eyes to his companion. "That ought to fetch *it*," said Tom, in answer to the look. "Ef it don't," replied Johnson doggedly, with an air of relieving himself of all further responsibility in the matter, "it 's got to, thet 's all!"

If "it" referred to some change in the physiognomy of Johnson, "it" had probably been "fetched" by the process just indicated. The head that went under the pump was large, and clothed with bushy, uncertain-colored hair; the face was flushed, puffy, and expressionless, the eyes injected and full. The head that came out from under the pump was of smaller size and different shape, the hair straight, dark, and sleek, the face pale and hollow-cheeked, the eyes bright and restless. In the haggard, nervous ascetic that rose from the horse-trough there was very little trace of the Bacchus that had bowed there a moment before. Familiar as Tom must have been with the spectacle, he could not help looking inquiringly at the trough, as if expecting to see some traces of the previous Johnson in its shallow depths.

A narrow strip of willow, alder, and buckeye — a mere dusty, raveled fringe of the green mantle that swept the high shoulders of Table Mountain — lapped the edge of the corral. The silent pair were quick to avail themselves of even its scant shelter from the overpowering sun. They had not proceeded far, before Johnson, who was walking quite rapidly in advance, suddenly brought himself up, and turned to his companion with an interrogative "Eh?"

"I did n't speak," said Tommy quietly.

"Who said you spoke?" said Johnson, with a quick look of cunning. "In course you did n't speak, and I did n't speak neither. Nobody spoke. Wot makes you think you spoke?" he continued, peering curiously into Tommy's eyes.

The smile which habitually shone there quickly vanished as the boy stepped quietly to his companion's side, and took his arm without a word.

"In course you did n't speak, Tommy," said Johnson deprecatingly. "You ain't a boy to go for to play an ole soaker like me. That 's wot I like you for. Thet 's wot I seed in you from the first. I sez, 'Thet 'ere boy ain't

going to play you, Johnson! You can go your whole pile on him, when you can't trust even a barkeep'.' Thet 's wot I said. Eh?"

This time Tommy prudently took no notice of the interrogation, and Johnson went on: "Ef I was to ask you another question, you would n't go to play me neither — would you, Tommy?"

"No," said the boy.

"Ef I was to ask you," continued Johnson, without heeding the reply, but with a growing anxiety of eye and a nervous twitching of his lips, — "ef I was to ask you, fur instance, ef that was a jackass rabbit that jest passed, — eh? — you 'd say it was or was not, ez the case may be. You would n't play the ole man on thet?"

"No," said Tommy quietly, "it *was* a jackass rabbit."

"Ef I was to ask you," continued Johnson, "ef it wore, say, fur instance, a green hat with yaller ribbons, you would n't play me, and say it did, onless" — he added, with intensified cunning — "onless it *did?*"

"No," said Tommy, "of course I would n't; but then, you see, *it did.*"

"It did?"

"It did!" repeated Tommy stoutly; "a green hat with yellow ribbons — and — and — a red rosette."

"I did n't get to see the ros-ette," said Johnson, with slow and conscientious deliberation, yet with an evident sense of relief; "but that ain't sayin' it wa'n't there, you know. Eh?"

Tommy glanced quietly at his companion. There were great beads of perspiration on his ashen-gray forehead, and on the ends of his lank hair; the hand which twitched spasmodically in his was cold and clammy, the other, which was free, had a vague, purposeless, jerky activity, as if attached to some deranged mechanism. Without any apparent concern in these phenomena, Tommy halted, and,

seating himself on a log, motioned his companion to a place beside him. Johnson obeyed without a word. Slight as was the act, perhaps no other incident of their singular companionship indicated as completely the dominance of this careless, half-effeminate, but self-possessed boy over this doggedly self-willed, abnormally excited man.

"It ain't the square thing," said Johnson, after a pause, with a laugh that was neither mirthful nor musical, and frightened away a lizard that had been regarding the pair with breathless suspense, — "it ain't the square thing for jackass rabbits to wear hats, Tommy, — is it, eh?"

"Well," said Tommy, with unmoved composure, "sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. Animals are mighty queer." And here Tommy went off in an animated, but, I regret to say, utterly untruthful and untrustworthy account of the habits of California fauna, until he was interrupted by Johnson.

"And snakes, eh, Tommy?" said the man, with an abstracted air, gazing intently on the ground before him.

"And snakes," said Tommy, "but they don't bite, — at least not that kind you see. There! — don't move, Uncle Ben, don't move; they're gone now. And it's about time you took your dose."

Johnson had hurriedly risen as if to leap upon the log, but Tommy had as quickly caught his arm with one hand while he drew a bottle from his pocket with the other. Johnson paused and eyed the bottle. "Ef you say so, my boy," he faltered, as his fingers closed nervously around it; "say 'when,' then." He raised the bottle to his lips and took a long draught, the boy regarding him critically. "When," said Tommy suddenly. Johnson started, flushed, and returned the bottle quickly. But the color that had risen to his cheek stayed there, his eye grew less restless, and as they moved away again the hand that rested on Tommy's shoulder was steadier.

Their way lay along the flank of Table Mountain, — a wandering trail through a tangled solitude that might have seemed virgin and unbroken but for a few oyster-cans, yeast-powder tins, and empty bottles that had been apparently stranded by the "first low wash" of pioneer waves. On the ragged trunk of an enormous pine hung a few tufts of gray hair caught from a passing grizzly, but in strange juxtaposition at its foot lay an empty bottle of incomparable bitters, — the *chef d'œuvre* of a hygienic civilization, and blazoned with the arms of an all-healing republic. The head of a rattlesnake peered from a case that had contained tobacco, which was still brightly placarded with the high-colored effigy of a popular danseuse. And a little beyond this the soil was broken and fissured, there was a confused mass of roughly hewn timber, a straggling line of sluicing, a heap of gravel and dirt, a rude cabin, and the claim of Johnson.

Except for the rudest purposes of shelter from rain and cold, the cabin possessed but little advantage over the simple savagery of surrounding nature. It had all the practical directness of the habitation of some animal, without its comfort or picturesque quality; the very birds that haunted it for food must have felt their own superiority as architects. It was inconceivably dirty, even with its scant capacity for accretion; it was singularly stale, even in its newness and freshness of material. Unspeakably dreary as it was in shadow, the sunlight visited it in a blind, aching, purposeless way, as if despairing of mellowing its outlines or of even tanning it into color.

The claim worked by Johnson in his intervals of sobriety was represented by half a dozen rude openings in the mountain-side, with the heaped-up débris of rock and gravel before the mouth of each. They gave very little evidence of engineering skill or constructive purpose, or indeed showed anything but the vague, successively aban-

doned essays of their projector. To-day they served another purpose, for as the sun had heated the little cabin almost to the point of combustion, curling up the long dry shingles, and starting aromatic tears from the green pine beams, Tommy led Johnson into one of the larger openings, and with a sense of satisfaction threw himself panting upon its rocky floor. Here and there the grateful dampness was condensed in quiet pools of water, or in a monotonous and soothing drip from the rocks above. Without lay the staring sunlight — colorless, clarified, intense.

For a few moments they lay resting on their elbows in blissful contemplation of the heat they had escaped. "Wot do you say," said Johnson slowly, without looking at his companion, but abstractedly addressing himself to the landscape beyond, — "wot do you say to two straight games fur one thousand dollars?"

"Make it five thousand," replied Tommy reflectively also to the landscape, "and I 'm in."

"Wot do I owe you now?" said Johnson, after a lengthened silence.

"One hundred and seventy-five thousand two hundred and fifty dollars," replied Tommy with business-like gravity.

"Well," said Johnson after a deliberation commensurate with the magnitude of the transaction, "ef you win, call it a hundred and eighty thousand, round. War's the keerds?"

They were in an old tin box in a crevice of a rock above his head. They were greasy and worn with service. Johnson dealt, albeit his right hand was still uncertain, — hovering, after dropping the cards, aimlessly about Tommy, and being only recalled by a strong nervous effort. Yet, notwithstanding this incapacity for even honest manipulation, Mr. Johnson covertly turned a knave from the bottom of the pack with such shameless inefficiency and gratuitous

unskillfulness, that even Tommy was obliged to cough and look elsewhere to hide his embarrassment. Possibly for this reason the young gentleman was himself constrained, by way of correction, to add a valuable card to his own hand, over and above the number he legitimately held.

Nevertheless the game was unexciting and dragged listlessly. Johnson won. He recorded the fact and the amount with a stub of pencil and shaking fingers in wandering hieroglyphics all over a pocket diary. Then there was a long pause, when Johnson slowly drew something from his pocket and held it up before his companion. It was apparently a dull red stone.

"Ef," said Johnson slowly, with his old look of simple cunning, — "ef you happened to pick up sich a rock ez that, Tommy, what might you say it was?"

"Don't know," said Tommy.

"Might n't you say," continued Johnson cautiously, "that it was gold or silver?"

"Neither," said Tommy promptly.

"Might n't you say it was quicksilver? Might n't you say that ef thar was a friend o' yourn ez knew war to go and turn out ten ton of it a day, and every ton worth two thousand dollars, that he had a soft thing, a very soft thing, — allowin', Tommy, that you used sich language, which you don't?"

"But," said the boy, coming to the point with great directness, "*do* you know where to get it? have you struck it, Uncle Ben?"

Johnson looked carefully round. "I hev, Tommy. Listen. I know whar thar 's cartloads of it. But thar 's only one other specimen — the mate to this yer — thet 's above ground, and thet 's in 'Frisco. Thar 's an agint comin' up in a day or two to look into it. I sent for him. Eh?"

His bright, restless eyes were concentrated on Tommy's

face now, but the boy showed neither surprise nor interest. Least of all did he betray any recollection of Bill's ironical and gratuitous corroboration of this part of the story.

"Nobody knows it," continued Johnson in a nervous whisper, — "nobody knows it but you and the agint in 'Frisco. The boys workin' round yar passes by and sees the old man grubbin' away, and no signs o' color, not even rotten quartz; the boys loafin' round the Mansion House sees the old man lyin' round free in bar-rooms, and they laughs and sez, 'Played out,' and spects nothin'. Maybe ye think they spects suthin' now, eh?" queried Johnson suddenly, with a sharp look of suspicion.

Tommy looked up, shook his head, threw a stone at a passing rabbit, but did not reply.

"When I fust set eyes on you, Tommy," continued Johnson, apparently reassured, "the fust day you kem and pumped for me, an entire stranger, and hevin' no call to do it, I sez, 'Johnson, Johnson,' sez I, 'yer's a boy you kin trust. Yer's a boy that won't play you; yer's a chap that's white and square,' — white and square, Tommy: them's the very words I used."

He paused for a moment, and then went on in a confidential whisper, "'You want capital, Johnson,' sez I, 'to develop your resources, and you want a pardner. Capital you can send for, but your pardner, Johnson, — your pardner is right yer. And his name, it is Tommy Islington' Them's the very words I used."

He stopped and chafed his clammy hands upon his knees. "It's six months ago sens I made you my pardner. Thar ain't a lick I've struck sens then, Tommy, thar ain't a han'ful o' yearth I've washed, thar ain't a shovelful o' rock I've turned over, but I tho't o' you. 'Share, and share alike,' sez I. When I wrote to my agint, I wrote ekal for my pardner, Tommy Islington, he hevin' no call to know ef the same was man or boy."

He had moved nearer the boy, and would perhaps have laid his hand caressingly upon him, but even in his manifest affection there was a singular element of awed restraint and even fear, — a suggestion of something withheld even his fullest confidences, a hopeless perception of some vague barrier that never could be surmounted. He may have been at times dimly conscious that, in the eyes which Tommy raised to his, there was thorough intellectual appreciation, critical good-humor, even feminine softness, but nothing more. His nervousness somewhat heightened by his embarrassment, he went on with an attempt at calmness which his twitching white lips and unsteady fingers made pathetically grotesque. "Thar 's a bill o' sale in my bunk, made out accordin' to law, of an ekal ondivided half of the claim, and the consideration is two hundred and fifty thousand dollars — gambling debts — gambling debts from me to you, Tommy, you understand?" — nothing could exceed the intense cunning of his eye at this moment — "and then thar 's a will."

"A will?" said Tommy in amused surprise.

Johnson looked frightened.

"Eh?" he said hurriedly, "wot will? Who said anythin' 'bout a will, Tommy?"

"Nobody," replied Tommy with unblushing calm.

Johnson passed his hand over his cold forehead, wrung the damp ends of his hair with his fingers, and went on: "Times when I 'm took bad ez I was to-day, the boys about yer sez — you sez, maybe, Tommy — it 's whiskey. It ain't, Tommy. It 's pizen — quicksilver pizen. That 's what 's the matter with me. I 'm salivated! Salivated with merkery.

"I 've heerd o' it before," continued Johnson, appealing to the boy, "and ez a boy o' permiskus reading, I reckon you hev too. Them men as works in cinnabar sooner or later gets salivated. It 's bound to fetch 'em some time. Salivated by merkery."

"What are you goin' to do for it?" asked Tommy.

"When the agint comes up, and I begins to realize on this yer mine," said Johnson contemplatively, "I goes to New York. I sez to the barkeep' o' the hotel, 'Show me the biggest doctor here.' He shows me. I sez to him, 'Salivated by merkery — a year's standin' — how much?' He sez, 'Five thousand dollars, and take two o' these pills at bedtime, and an ekil number o' powders at meals, and come back in a week.' And I goes back in a week, cured, and signs a certifikit to that effect."

Encouraged by a look of interest in Tommy's eye, he went on.

"So I gets cured. I goes to the barkeep', and I sez, 'Show me the biggest, fashionblest house thet 's for sale yer.' And he sez, 'The biggest nat'rally b'longs to John Jacob Astor.' And I sez, 'Show him,' and he shows him. And I sez, 'Wot might you ask for this yer house?' And he looks at me scornful, and sez, 'Go 'way, old man; you must be sick.' And I fetches him one over the left eye and he apologizes, and I gives him his own price for the house. I stocks that house with mahogany furniture and pervisions, and thar we lives, — you and me, Tommy, you and me!"

The sun no longer shone upon the hillside. The shadows of the pines were beginning to creep over Johnson's claim, and the air within the cavern was growing chill. In the gathering darkness his eyes shone brightly as he went on: "Then thar comes a day when we gives a big spread. We invites gov'ners, members o' Congress, gentlemen o' fashion, and the like. And among 'em I invites a Man as holds his head very high, a Man I once knew; but he does n't know I knows him, and he does n't remember me. And he comes and he sits opposite me, and I watches him. And he 's very airy, this Man, and very chipper, and he wipes his mouth with a white hankercher, and he smiles,

and he ketches my eye. And he sez, 'A glass o' wine with you, Mr. Johnson;' and he fills his glass and I fills mine, and we rises. And I heaves that wine, glass and all, right into his damned grinnin' face. And he jumps for me — for he is very game this Man, very game — but some on 'em grabs him, and he sez, 'Who be you?' And I sez, 'Skaggs! Damn you, Skaggs! Look at me! Gimme back my wife and child, gimme back the money you stole, gimme back the good name you took away, gimme back the health you ruined, gimme back the last twelve years! Give 'em to me, damn you, quick, before I cuts your heart out!' And naterally, Tommy, he can't do it. And so I cuts his heart out, my boy; I cuts his heart out."

The purely animal fury of his eye suddenly changed again to cunning. "You think they hangs me for it, Tommy, but they don't. Not much, Tommy. I goes to the biggest lawyer there, and I says to him, 'Salivated by merkery — you hear me — salivated by merkery.' And he winks at me, and he goes to the judge, and he sez, 'This yer unfortnet man is n't responsible — he 's been salivated by merkery.' And he brings witnesses; you comes, Tommy, and you sez ez how you 've seen me took bad afore; and the doctor, he comes, and he sez as how he 's seen me frightful; and the jury, without leavin' their seats, brings in a verdict o' justifiable insanity, — salivated by merkery."

In the excitement of his climax he had risen to his feet, but would have fallen had not Tommy caught him and led him into the open air. In this sharper light there was an odd change visible in his yellow-white face, — a change which caused Tommy to hurriedly support him, half leading, half dragging him toward the little cabin. When they had reached it, Tommy placed him on a rude "bunk," or shelf, and stood for a moment in anxious contemplation of the tremor-stricken man before him. Then he said rapidly, "Listen, Uncle Ben. I 'm goin' to town — to town, you

understand — for the doctor. You're not to get up or move on any account until I return. Do you hear?" Johnson nodded violently. "I'll be back in two hours." In another moment he was gone.

For an hour Johnson kept his word. Then he suddenly sat up, and began to gaze fixedly at a corner of the cabin. From gazing at it he began to smile, from smiling at it he began to talk, from talking at it he began to scream, from screaming he passed to cursing and sobbing wildly. Then he lay quiet again.

He was so still that to merely human eyes he might have seemed asleep or dead. But a squirrel, that, emboldened by the stillness, had entered from the roof, stopped short upon a beam above the bunk, for he saw that the man's foot was slowly and cautiously moving towards the floor, and that the man's eyes were as intent and watchful as his own. Presently, still without a sound, both feet were upon the floor. And then the bunk creaked, and the squirrel whisked into the eaves of the roof. When he peered forth again, everything was quiet, and the man was gone.

An hour later two muleteers on the Placerville Road passed a man with disheveled hair, glaring, bloodshot eyes, and clothes torn with bramble and stained with the red dust of the mountain. They pursued him, when he turned fiercely on the foremost, wrested a pistol from his grasp, and broke away. Later still, when the sun had dropped behind Payne's Ridge, the underbrush on Deadwood Slope crackled with a stealthy but continuous tread. It must have been an animal whose dimly outlined bulk, in the gathering darkness, showed here and there in vague but incessant motion; it could be nothing but an animal whose utterance was at once so incoherent, monotonous, and unremitting. Yet, when the sound came nearer, and the chaparral was parted, it seemed to be a man, and that man Johnson.

Above the baying of phantasmal hounds that pressed him hard and drove him on, with never rest or mercy; above the lashing of a spectral whip that curled about his limbs, sang in his ears, and continually stung him forward; above the outcries of the unclean shapes that thronged about him, — he could still distinguish one real sound, the rush and sweep of hurrying waters. The Stanislaus River! A thousand feet below him drove its yellowing current. Through all the vacillations of his unseated mind he had clung to one idea — to reach the river, to lave in it, to swim it if need be, but to put it forever between him and the harrying shapes, to drown forever in its turbid depths the thronging spectres, to wash away in its yellow flood all stains and color of the past. And now he was leaping from boulder to boulder, from blackened stump to stump, from gnarled bush to bush, caught for a moment and withheld by clinging vines, or plunging downward into dusty hollows, until, rolling, dropping, sliding, and stumbling, he reached the river-bank, whereon he fell, rose, staggered forward, and fell again with outstretched arms upon a rock that breasted the swift current. And there he lay as dead.

A few stars came out hesitatingly above Deadwood Slope. A cold wind that had sprung up with the going down of the sun fanned them into momentary brightness, swept the heated flanks of the mountain, and ruffled the river. Where the fallen man lay there was a sharp curve in the stream, so that in the gathering shadows the rushing water seemed to leap out of the darkness and to vanish again. Decayed driftwood, trunks of trees, fragments of broken sluicing — the wash and waste of many a mile — swept into sight a moment, and were gone. All of decay, wreck, and foulness gathered in the long circuit of mining-camp and settlement, all the dregs and refuse of a crude and wanton civilization, reappeared for an instant, and then were hurried away in the darkness and lost. No wonder

that, as the wind ruffled the yellow waters, the waves seemed to lift their unclean hands toward the rock whereon the fallen man lay, as if eager to snatch him from it, too, and hurry him toward the sea.

It was very still. In the clear air a horn blown a mile away was heard distinctly. The jingling of a spur and a laugh on the highway over Payne's Ridge sounded clearly across the river. The rattling of harness and hoofs foretold for many minutes the approach of the Wingdam coach, that at last, with flashing lights, passed within a few feet of the rock. Then for an hour all again was quiet. Presently the moon, round and full, lifted herself above the serried ridge and looked down upon the river. At first the bared peak of Deadwood Hill gleamed white and skull-like. Then the shadows of Payne's Ridge cast on the slope slowly sank away, leaving the unshapely stumps, the dusty fissures, and clinging outcrop of Deadwood Slope to stand out in black and silver. Still stealing softly downward, the moonlight touched the bank and the rock, and then glittered brightly on the river. The rock was bare and the man was gone, but the river still hurried swiftly to the sea.

"Is there anything for me?" asked Tommy Islington, as, a week after, the stage drew up at the Mansion House, and Bill slowly entered the bar-room. Bill did not reply, but, turning to a stranger who had entered with him, indicated with a jerk of his finger the boy. The stranger turned with an air half of business, half of curiosity, and looked critically at Tommy. "Is there anything for me?" repeated Tommy, a little confused at the silence and scrutiny. Bill walked deliberately to the bar, and, placing his back against it, faced Tommy with a look of demure enjoyment.

"Ef," he remarked slowly, — "ef a hundred thousand dollars down and half a million in perspektive is enny thing, Major, THERE IS!"

PART II. — EAST

It was characteristic of Angel's that the disappearance of Johnson, and the fact that he had left his entire property to Tommy, thrilled the community but slightly in comparison with the astounding discovery that he had anything to leave. The finding of a cinnabar lode at Angel's absorbed all collateral facts or subsequent details. Prospectors from adjoining camps thronged the settlement; the hillside for a mile on either side of Johnson's claim was staked out and pre-empted; trade received a sudden stimulus; and, in the excited rhetoric of the "Weekly Record," "a new era had broken upon Angel's." "On Thursday last," added that paper, "over five hundred dollars were taken in over the bar of the Mansion House."

Of the fate of Johnson there was little doubt. He had been last seen lying on a boulder on the river-bank by outside passengers of the Wingdam night coach, and when Finn of Robinson's Ferry admitted to have fired three shots from a revolver at a dark object struggling in the water near the ferry, which he "suspicioned" to be a bear, the question seemed to be settled. Whatever might have been the fallibility of his judgment, of the accuracy of his aim there could be no doubt. The general belief that Johnson, after possessing himself of the muleteer's pistol, could have run amuck gave a certain retributive justice to this story, which rendered it acceptable to the camp.

It was also characteristic of Angel's that no feeling of envy or opposition to the good fortune of Tommy Islington prevailed there. That he was thoroughly cognizant, from the first, of Johnson's discovery, that his attentions to him were interested, calculating, and speculative, was, however, the general belief of the majority, — a belief that, singularly enough, awakened the first feelings of genuine respect

for Tommy ever shown by the camp. "He ain't no fool; Yuba Bill seed thet from the first," said the barkeeper. It was Yuba Bill who applied for the guardianship of Tommy after his accession to Johnson's claim, and on whose bonds the richest men of Calaveras were represented. It was Yuba Bill, also, when Tommy was sent East to finish his education, who accompanied him to San Francisco, and, before parting with his charge on the steamer's deck, drew him aside, and said, "Ef at enny time you want enny money, Tommy, over and 'bove your 'lowance, you kin write; but ef you 'll take my advice," he added, with a sudden huskiness mitigating the severity of his voice, "you 'll forget every derned ole spavined, string-halted bummer, as you ever met or knew at Angel's, — ev'ry one, Tommy, — ev'ry one! And so — boy — take care of yourself — and — and God bless ye, and pertikerly d—n me for a first-class A 1 fool." It was Yuba Bill, also, after this speech, who glared savagely around, walked down the crowded gang-plank with a rigid and aggressive shoulder, picked a quarrel with his cabman, and, after bundling that functionary into his own vehicle, took the reins himself, and drove furiously to his hotel. "It cost me," said Bill, recounting the occurrence somewhat later at Angel's, — "it cost me a matter o' twenty dollars afore the jedge the next mornin'; but you kin bet high thet I taught them 'Frisco chaps suthin' new about drivin'. I did n't make it lively in Montgomery Street for about ten minutes — oh no!"

And so by degrees the two original locators of the great Cinnabar Lode faded from the memory of Angel's, and Calaveras knew them no more. In five years their very names had been forgotten; in seven the name of the town was changed; in ten the town itself was transported bodily to the hillside, and the chimney of the Union Smelting Works by night flickered like a corpse-light over the site of Johnson's cabin, and by day poisoned the pure spices of the

pines. Even the Mansion House was dismantled, and the Wingdam stage deserted the highway for a shorter cut by Quicksilver City. Only the bared crest of Deadwood Hill, as of old, sharply cut the clear blue sky, and at its base, as of old, the Stanislaus River, unwearied and unresting, babbled whispered, and hurried away to the sea.

A midsummer's day was breaking lazily on the Atlantic. There was not wind enough to move the vapors in the foggy offing, but when the vague distance heaved against a violet sky there were dull red streaks that, growing brighter, presently painted out the stars. Soon the brown rocks of Greyport appeared faintly suffused, and then the whole ashen line of dead coast was kindled, and the lighthouse beacons went out one by one. And then a hundred sail, before invisible, started out of the vapory horizon, and pressed toward the shore. It was morning, indeed, and some of the best society in Greyport, having been up all night, were thinking it was time to go to bed.

For as the sky flashed brighter it fired the clustering red roofs of a picturesque house by the sands that had all that night, from open lattice and illuminated balcony, given light and music to the shore. It glittered on the broad crystal spaces of a great conservatory that looked upon an exquisite lawn, where all night long the blended odors of sea and shore had swooned under the summer moon. But it wrought confusion among the colored lamps on the long veranda, and startled a group of ladies and gentlemen who had stepped from the drawing-room window to gaze upon it. It was so searching and sincere in its way, that, as the carriage of the fairest Miss Gillyflower rolled away, that peerless young woman, catching sight of her face in the oval mirror, instantly pulled down the blinds, and, nestling the whitest shoulders in Greyport against the crimson cushions, went to sleep.

"How haggard everybody is! Rose, dear, you look almost intellectual," said Blanche Masterman.

"I hope not," said Rose simply. "Sunrises are very trying. Look how that pink regularly puts out Mrs. Brown-Robinson, hair and all!"

"The angels," said the Count de Nugat, with a polite gesture toward the sky, "must have find these celestial combinations very bad for the toilette."

"They 're safe in white, — except when they sit for their pictures in Venice," said Blanche. "How fresh Mr. Islington looks! It 's really uncomplimentary to us."

"I suppose the sun recognizes in me no rival," said the young man demurely. "But," he added, "I have lived much in the open air and require very little sleep."

"How delightful!" said Mrs. Brown-Robinson in a low, enthusiastic voice, and a manner that held the glowing sentiment of sixteen and the practical experiences of thirty-two in dangerous combination; — "how perfectly delightful! What sunrises you must have seen, and in such wild, romantic places! How I envy you! My nephew was a classmate of yours, and has often repeated to me those charming stories you tell of your adventures. Won't you tell some now? Do! How you must tire of us and this artificial life here, so frightfully artificial, you know" (in a confidential whisper); "and then to think of the days when you roamed the great West with the Indians, and the bisons, and the grizzly bears! Of course, you have seen grizzly bears and bisons?"

"Of course he has, dear," said Blanche a little pettishly, throwing a cloak over her shoulders, and seizing her chaperon by the arm; "his earliest infancy was soothed by bisons, and he proudly points to the grizzly bear as the playmate of his youth. Come with me, and I 'll tell you all about it. How good it is of you," she added, *sotto voce*, to Islington as he stood by the carriage, — "how perfectly good it is of

you to be like those animals you tell us of, and not know your full power. Think, with your experiences and our credulity, what stories you *might* tell! And you are going to walk? Good-night, then." A slim, gloved hand was frankly extended from the window, and the next moment the carriage rolled away.

"Is n't Islington throwing away a chance there?" said Captain Merwin on the veranda.

"Perhaps he could n't stand my lovely aunt's superadded presence. But then, he 's the guest of Blanche's father, and I daresay they see enough of each other as it is."

"But is n't it a rather dangerous situation?"

"For him, perhaps; although he 's awfully old, and very queer. For her, with an experience that takes in all the available men in both hemispheres, ending with Nugat over there, I should say a man more or less would n't affect her much, anyway. Of course," he laughed, "these are the accents of bitterness. But that was last year."

Perhaps Islington did not overhear the speaker; perhaps, if he did, the criticism was not new. He turned carelessly away, and sauntered out on the road to the sea. Thence he strolled along the sands toward the cliffs, where, meeting an impediment in the shape of a garden wall, he leaped it with a certain agile, boyish ease and experience, and struck across an open lawn toward the rocks again. The best society of Greyport were not early risers, and the spectacle of a trespasser in an evening dress excited only the criticism of grooms hanging about the stables, or cleanly housemaids on the broad verandas that in Greyport architecture dutifully gave upon the sea. Only once, as he entered the boundaries of Cliffwood Lodge, the famous seat of Renwyck Masterman, was he aware of suspicious scrutiny; but a slouching figure that vanished quickly in the lodge offered no opposition to his progress. Avoiding the pathway to the lodge, Islington

kept along the rocks until, reaching a little promontory and rustic pavilion, he sat down and gazed upon the sea.

And presently an infinite peace stole upon him. Except where the waves lapped lazily the crags below, the vast expanse beyond seemed unbroken by ripple, heaving only in broad ponderable sheets, and rhythmically, as if still in sleep. The air was filled with a luminous haze that caught and held the direct sunbeams. In the deep calm that lay upon the sea, it seemed to Islington that all the tenderness of culture, magic of wealth, and spell of refinement that for years had wrought upon that favored shore had extended its gracious influence even here. What a pampered and caressed old ocean it was; cajoled, flattered, and fêted where it lay! An odd recollection of the turbid Stanislaus hurrying by the ascetic pines, of the grim outlines of Deadwood Hill, swam before his eyes, and made the yellow green of the velvet lawn and graceful foliage seem almost tropical by contrast. And, looking up, a few yards distant he beheld a tall slip of a girl gazing upon the sea — Blanche Masterman.

She had plucked somewhere a large fan-shaped leaf, which she held parasol-wise, shading the blonde masses of her hair, and hiding her gray eyes. She had changed her festal dress, with its amplitude of flounce and train, for a closely fitting, half-antique habit whose scant outlines would have been trying to limbs less shapely, but which prettily accented the graceful curves and sweeping lines of this Greyport goddess. As Islington rose, she came toward him with a frankly outstretched hand and unconstrained manner. Had she observed him first? I don't know.

They sat down together on a rustic seat, Miss Blanche facing the sea and shading her eyes with the leaf.

"I don't really know how long I have been sitting here," said Islington, "or whether I have not been actually asleep and dreaming. It seemed too lovely a morning to go to bed. But you?"

From behind the leaf, it appeared that Miss Blanche, on retiring, had been pursued by a hideous four-winged insect which defied the efforts of herself and maid to dislodge. Odin, the Spitz dog, had insisted upon scratching at the door. And it made her eyes red to sleep in the morning. And she had an early call to make. And the sea looked lovely.

"I 'm glad to find you here, whatever be the cause," said Islington, with his old directness. "To-day, as you know, is my last day in Greyport, and it is much pleasanter to say good-by under this blue sky than even beneath your father's wonderful frescoes yonder. I want to remember you, too, as part of this pleasant prospect which belongs to us all, rather than recall you in anybody's particular setting."

"I know," said Blanche, with equal directness, "that houses are one of the defects of our civilization; but I don't think I ever heard the idea as elegantly expressed before. Where do you go?"

"I don't know yet. I have several plans. I may go to South America and become president of one of the republics, — I am not particular which. I am rich, but in that part of America which lies outside of Greyport it is necessary for every man to have some work. My friends think I should have some great aim in life, with a capital A. But I was born a vagabond, and a vagabond I shall probably die."

"I don't know anybody in South America," said Blanche languidly. "There were two girls here last season, but they did n't wear stays in the house, and their white frocks never were properly done up. If you go to South America, you must write to me."

"I will. Can you tell me the name of this flower which I found in your greenhouse? It looks much like a California blossom."

"Perhaps it is. Father bought it of a half-crazy old man who came here one day. Do you know him?"

Islington laughed. "I am afraid not. But let me present this in a less business-like fashion."

"Thank you. Remind me to give you one in return before you go, — or will you choose yourself?"

They had both risen as by a common instinct.

"Good-by."

The cool, flower-like hand lay in his for an instant.

"Will you oblige me by putting aside that leaf a moment before I go?"

"But my eyes are red, and I look like a perfect fright."

Yet, after a long pause, the leaf fluttered down, and a pair of very beautiful but withal very clear and critical eyes met his. Islington was constrained to look away. When he turned again she was gone.

"Mr. Hislington, — sir!"

It was Chalker, the English groom, out of breath with running.

"Seein' you alone, sir — beg your pardon, sir — but there 's a person" —

"A person! what the devil do you mean? Speak English — no, damn it, I mean don't," said Islington snappishly.

"I said a person, sir. Beg pardon — no offense — but not a gent, sir. In the lib'ry."

A little amused even through the utter dissatisfaction with himself and vague loneliness that had suddenly come upon him, Islington, as he walked toward the lodge, asked, "Why is n't he a gent?"

"No gent — beggin' your pardin, sir — 'ud guy a man in sarvis, sir. Takes me 'ands so, sir, as I sits in the rumble at the gate, and puts 'em downd so, sir, and sez, 'Put 'em in your pocket, young man, — or is it a road agint you expects to see, that you 'olds hup your 'ands, hand crosses 'em like to that?' sez he. ''Old 'ard,' sez he, 'on the short curves, or you'll bust your precious crust,' sez he. And hasks for you, sir. This way, sir."

They entered the lodge. Islington hurried down the long Gothic hall and opened the library door.

In an armchair, in the centre of the room, a man sat apparently contemplating a large, stiff, yellow hat with an enormous brim, that was placed on the floor before him. His hands rested lightly between his knees, but one foot was drawn up at the side of his chair in a peculiar manner. In the first glance that Islington gave, the attitude in some odd, irreconcilable way suggested a brake. In another moment he dashed across the room, and, holding out both hands, cried, "Yuba Bill!"

The man rose, caught Islington by the shoulders, wheeled him round, hugged him, felt of his ribs like a good-natured ogre, shook his hands violently, laughed, and then said somewhat ruefully, "And however did you know me?"

Seeing that Yuba Bill evidently regarded himself as in some elaborate disguise, Islington laughed, and suggested that it must have been instinct.

"And you?" said Bill, holding him at arm's length and surveying him critically, — "you! — toe think — toe think — a little cuss no higher nor a trace, a boy as I've flicked outer the road with a whip time in agin, a boy ez never hed much clothes to speak of, turned into a sport!"

Islington remembered, with a thrill of ludicrous terror, that he still wore his evening dress.

"Turned," continued Yuba Bill severely, — "turned into a restyourant waiter, — a garsong! Eh, Alfonse, bring me a patty de foy grass and an omelet, demme!"

"Dear old chap!" said Islington, laughing, and trying to put his hand over Bill's bearded mouth, "but you — *you* don't look exactly like yourself! You're not well, Bill." And indeed, as he turned toward the light, Bill's eyes appeared cavernous, and his hair and beard thickly streaked with gray.

"Maybe it's this yer harness," said Bill a little anxiously.

"When I hitches on this yer curb" (he indicated a massive gold watch-chain with enormous links), "and mounts this 'morning star'" (he pointed to a very large solitaire pin which had the appearance of blistering his whole shirt-front), "it kinder weighs heavy on me, Tommy. Otherwise I'm all right, my boy — all right." But he evaded Islington's keen eye and turned from the light.

"You have something to tell me, Bill," said Islington suddenly and with almost brusque directness; "out with it."

Bill did not speak, but moved uneasily toward his hat.

"You didn't come three thousand miles, without a word of warning, to talk to me of old times," said Islington more kindly, "glad as I would have been to see you. It isn't your way, Bill, and you know it. We shall not be disturbed here," he added, in reply to an inquiring glance that Bill directed to the door, "and I am ready to hear you."

"Firstly, then," said Bill, drawing his chair nearer Islington, "answer me one question, Tommy, fair and square, and up and down."

"Go on," said Islington with a slight smile.

"Ef I should say to you, Tommy — say to you to-day, right here, you must come with me — you must leave this place for a month, a year, two years, maybe, perhaps for ever — is there anything that 'ud keep you — anything, my boy, ez you could n't leave?"

"No," said Tommy quietly; "I am only visiting here. I thought of leaving Greyport to-day."

"But if I should say to you, Tommy, come with me on a *pasear* to Chiny, to Japan, to South Ameriky, p'r'aps, could you go?"

"Yes," said Islington after a slight pause.

"Thar isn't ennything," said Bill, drawing a little closer, and lowering his voice confidentially, — "ennything in the

way of a young woman — you understand, Tommy — ez would keep you? They're mighty sweet about here; and whether a man is young or old, Tommy, there's always some woman as is brake or whip to him!"

In a certain excited bitterness that characterized the delivery of this abstract truth, Bill did not see that the young man's face flushed slightly as he answered "No."

"Then listen. It's seven years ago, Tommy, thet I was working one o' the Pioneer coaches over from Gold Hill. Ez I stood in front o' the stage-office, the sheriff o' the county comes to me, and he sez, 'Bill,' sez he, 'I've got a looney chap, as I'm in charge of, taking 'im down to the 'sylum in Stockton. He'z quiet and peaceable, but the insides don't like to ride with him. Hev you enny objection to give him a lift on the box beside you?' I sez, 'No; put him up.' When I came to go and get up on that box beside him, that man, Tommy — that man sittin' there, quiet and peaceable, was — Johnson!

"He didn't know me, my boy," Yuba Bill continued, rising and putting his hands on Tommy's shoulders, — "he didn't know me. He didn't know nothing about you, nor Angel's, nor the quicksilver lode, nor even his own name. He said his name was Skaggs, but I knowed it was Johnson. Thar was times, Tommy, you might have knocked me off that box with a feather; thar was times when if the twenty-seven passengers o' that stage hed found theirselves swimming in the American River five hundred feet below the road, I never could have explained it satisfactorily to the company, — never.

"The sheriff said," Bill continued hastily, as if to preclude any interruption from the young man, — "the sheriff said he had been brought into Murphy's Camp three years before, dripping with water, and sufferin' from perkussion of the brain, and had been cared for generally by the boys 'round. When I told the sheriff I knowed 'im, I got him

to leave him in my care; and I took him to 'Frisco, Tommy, to 'Frisco, and I put him in charge o' the best doctors there, and paid his board myself. There was nothin' he didn't have ez he wanted. Don't look that way, my dear boy, for God's sake don't!"

"O Bill!" said Islington, rising and staggering to the window, "why did you keep this from me?"

"Why?" said Bill, turning on him savagely, — "why? because I wa'n't a fool. Thar was you, winnin' your way in college; thar was *you*, risin' in the world, and of some account to it. Yer was an old bummer, ez good ez dead to it — a man ez oughter been dead afore! a man ez never denied it! But you allus liked him better nor me," said Bill bitterly.

"Forgive me, Bill," said the young man, seizing both his hands. "I know you did it for the best; but go on."

"Thar ain't much more to tell, nor much use to tell it, as I can see," said Bill moodily. "He never could be cured, the doctors said, for he had what they called monomania — was always talking about his wife and darter that somebody had stole away years ago, and plannin' revenge on that somebody. And six months ago he was missed. I tracked him to Carson, to Salt Lake City, to Omaha, to Chicago, to New York, — and here!"

"Here!" echoed Islington.

"Here! And that's what brings me here to-day. Whether he's crazy or well, whether he's huntin' you or lookin' up that other man, you must get away from here. You must n't see him. You and me, Tommy, will go away on a cruise. In three or four years he'll be dead or missing, and then we'll come back. Come." And he rose to his feet.

"Bill," said Islington, rising also, and taking the hand of his friend with the same quiet obstinacy that in the old days had endeared him to Bill, "wherever he is, here or

elsewhere, sane or crazy, I shall seek and find him. Every dollar that I have shall be his, every dollar that I have spent shall be returned to him. I am young yet, thank God, and can work; and if there is a way out of this miserable business, I shall find it."

"I knew," said Bill with a surliness that ill concealed his evident admiration of the calm figure before him — "I knew the partikler style of d—n fool that you was, and expected no better. Good-by, then — God Almighty! who 's that?"

He was on his way to the open French window, but had started back, his face quite white and bloodless, and his eyes staring. Islington ran to the window and looked out. A white skirt vanished around the corner of the veranda. When he returned, Bill had dropped into a chair.

"It must have been Miss Masterman, I think; but what 's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Bill faintly; "have you got any whiskey handy?"

Islington brought a decanter and, pouring out some spirits, handed the glass to Bill. Bill drained it, and then said, "Who is Miss Masterman?"

"Mr. Masterman's daughter; that is, an adopted daughter, I believe."

"Wot name?"

"I really don't know," said Islington pettishly, more vexed than he cared to own at this questioning.

Yuba Bill rose and walked to the window, closed it, walked back again to the door, glanced at Islington, hesitated, and then returned to his chair.

"I did n't tell you I was married — did I?" he said suddenly, looking up in Islington's face with an unsuccessful attempt at a reckless laugh.

"No," said Islington, more pained at the manner than the words.

"Fact," said Yuba Bill. "Three years ago it was, Tommy, — three years ago!"

He looked so hard at Islington that, feeling he was expected to say something, he asked vaguely, "Whom did you marry?"

"Thet 's it!" said Yuba Bill; "I can't ezactly say; partikly, though a she-devil! generally, the wife of half a dozen other men."

Accustomed, apparently, to have his conjugal infelicities a theme of mirth among men, and seeing no trace of amusement on Islington's grave face, his dogged, reckless manner softened, and, drawing his chair closer to Islington, he went on: "It all began outer this: we was coming down Watson's grade one night pretty free, when the expressman turns to me and says, 'There 's a row inside, and you 'd better pull up!' I pulls up, and out hops, first a woman, and then two or three chaps swearin' and cursin', and tryin' to drag some one arter them. Then it 'peared, Tommy, thet it was this woman's drunken husband they was going to put out for abusin' her and strikin' her in the coach; and if it had n't been for me, my boy, they 'd have left that chap thar in the road. But I fixes matters up by putting her alongside o' me on the box, and we drove on. She was very white, Tommy, — for the matter o' that, she was always one o' these very white women, that never got red in the face, — but she never cried a whimper. Most women would have cried. It was queer, but she never cried. I thought so at the time.

"She was very tall, with a lot o' light hair meandering down the back of her head, as long as a deerskin whiplash, and about the color. She hed eyes thet 'd bore ye through at fifty yards, and pooty hands and feet. And when she kinder got out o' that stiff, narvous state she was in, and warmed up a little, and got chipper, by G—d, sir, she was handsome, — she was that!"

A little flushed and embarrassed at his own enthusiasm, he stopped, and then said carelessly, "They got off at Murphy's."

"Well," said Islington.

"Well, I used to see her often arter thet, and when she was alone she allus took the box-seat. She kinder confided her troubles to me, how her husband got drunk and abused her; and I did n't see much o' him, for he was away in 'Frisco arter thet. But it was all square, Tommy, — all square 'twixt me and her.

"I got a-going there a good deal, and then one day I sez to myself, 'Bill, this won't do,' and I got changed to another route. Did you ever know Jackson Filltree, Tommy?" said Bill, breaking off suddenly.

"No."

"Might have heerd of him, p'r'aps?"

"No," said Islington impatiently.

"Jackson Filltree ran the express from White's out to Summit, 'cross the North Fork of the Yuba. One day he sez to me, 'Bill, that's a mighty bad ford at the North Fork.' I sez, 'I believe you, Jackson.' 'It 'll git me some day, Bill, sure,' sez he. I sez, 'Why don't you take the lower ford?' 'I don't know,' sez he, 'but I can't.' So ever after, when I met him, he sez, 'That North Fork ain't got me yet.' One day I was in Sacramento, and up comes Filltree. He sez, 'I 've sold out the express business on account of the North Fork, but it 's bound to get me yet, Bill, sure;' and he laughs. Two weeks after they finds his body below the ford, whar he tried to cross, comin' down from the summit way. Folks said it was foolishness; Tommy, I sez it was Fate! The second day arter I was changed to the Placerville route, thet woman comes outer the hotel above the stage-office. Her husband, she said, was lying sick in Placerville; that 's what she said; but it was Fate, Tommy, Fate. Three months afterward, her

husband takes an overdose of morphine for delirium tremens, and dies. There 's folks ez sez she gave it to him, but it 's Fate. A year after that I married her, — Fate, Tommy, Fate!

"I lived with her jest three months," he went on, after a long breath, — "three months! It ain't much time for a happy man. I've seen a good deal o' hard life in my day, but there was days in that three months longer than any day in my life, — days, Tommy, when it was a toss-up whether I should kill her or she me. But thar, I 'm done. You are a young man, Tommy, and I ain't goin' to tell things thet, old as I am, three years ago I could n't have believed."

When at last, with his grim face turned toward the window, he sat silently with his clenched hands on his knees before him, Islington asked where his wife was now.

"Ask me no more, my boy, — no more. I 've said my say." With a gesture as of throwing down a pair of reins before him, he rose, and walked to the window.

"You kin understand, Tommy, why a little trip around the world 'ud do me good. Ef you can't go with me, well and good. But go I must."

"Not before luncheon, I hope," said a very sweet voice, as Blanche Masterman suddenly stood before them. "Father would never forgive me if in his absence I permitted one of Mr. Islington's friends to go in this way. You will stay, won't you? Do! And you will give me your arm now; and when Mr. Islington has done staring, he will follow us into the dining-room and introduce you."

"I have quite fallen in love with your friend," said Miss Blanche, as they stood in the drawing-room looking at the figure of Bill, strolling, with his short pipe in his mouth, through the distant shrubbery. "He asks very queer ques-

tions, though. He wanted to know my mother's maiden name."

"He is an honest fellow," said Islington gravely.

"You are very much subdued. You don't thank me, I daresay, for keeping you and your friend here; but you could n't go, you know, until father returned."

Islington smiled, but not very gayly.

"And then I think it much better for us to part here under these frescoes, don't you? Good-by."

She extended her long, slim hand.

"Out in the sunlight there, when my eyes were red, you were very anxious to look at me," she added in a dangerous voice.

Islington raised his sad eyes to hers. Something glittering upon her own sweet lashes trembled and fell.

"Blanche!"

She was rosy enough now, and would have withdrawn her hand, but Islington detained it. She was not quite certain but that her waist was also in jeopardy. Yet she could not help saying, "Are you sure that there is n't anything in the way of a young woman that would keep you?"

"Blanche!" said Islington in reproachful horror.

"If gentlemen will roar out their secrets before an open window, with a young woman lying on a sofa on the veranda, reading a stupid French novel, they must not be surprised if she gives more attention to them than to her book."

"Then you know all, Blanche?"

"I know," said Blanche, "let 's see — I know the partikler style of — ahem! — fool you was, and expected no better. Good-by." And, gliding like a lovely and innocent milk snake out of his grasp, she slipped away.

To the pleasant ripple of waves, the sound of music and light voices, the yellow midsummer moon again rose over Greyport. It looked upon formless masses of rock and

shrubbery, wide spaces of lawn and beach, and a shimmering expanse of water. It singled out particular objects, — a white sail in shore, a crystal globe upon the lawn, and flashed upon something held between the teeth of a crouching figure scaling the low wall of Cliffwood Lodge. Then, as a man and woman passed out from under the shadows of the foliage into the open moonlight of the garden path, the figure leaped from the wall, and stood erect and waiting in the shadow.

It was the figure of an old man, with rolling eyes, his trembling hand grasping a long, keen knife, — a figure more pitiable than pitiless, more pathetic than terrible. But the next moment the knife was stricken from his hand, and he struggled in the firm grasp of another figure that apparently sprang from the wall beside him.

"D—n you, Masterman!" cried the old man hoarsely; "give me fair play, and I'll kill you yet!"

"Which my name is Yuba Bill," said Bill quietly, "and it's time this d—n fooling was stopped."

The old man glared in Bill's face savagely. "I know you. You're one of Masterman's friends, — d—n you, — let me go till I cut his heart out, — let me go! Where is my Mary? — where is my wife? — there she is! there! — there! — there! Mary!" He would have screamed, but Bill placed his powerful hand upon his mouth as he turned in the direction of the old man's glance. Distinct in the moonlight the figures of Islington and Blanche, arm in arm, stood out upon the garden path.

"Give me my wife!" muttered the old man hoarsely between Bill's fingers. "Where is she?"

A sudden fury passed over Yuba Bill's face. "Where is your wife?" he echoed, pressing the old man back against the garden wall, and holding him there as in a vise. "Where is your wife?" he repeated, thrusting his grim sardonic jaw and savage eyes into the old man's frightened

face. "Where is Jack Adam's wife? Where is MY wife? Where is the she-devil that drove one man mad, that sent another to hell by his own hand, that eternally broke and ruined me? Where! Where! Do you ask where? In jail in Sacramento, — in jail, do you hear? — in jail for murder, Johnson, — murder!"

The old man gasped, stiffened, and then, relaxing, suddenly slipped, a mere inanimate mass, at Yuba Bill's feet. With a sudden revulsion of feeling, Yuba Bill dropped at his side, and, lifting him tenderly in his arms, whispered, "Look up, old man, Johnson! look up, for God's sake! — it 's me, — Yuba Bill! and yonder is your daughter, and — Tommy — don't you know — Tommy, little Tommy Islington?"

Johnson's eyes slowly opened. He whispered, "Tommy! yes, Tommy! Sit by me, Tommy. But don't sit so near the bank. Don't you see how the river is rising and beckoning to me — hissing, and boilin' over the rocks? It 's gittin' higher! — hold me, Tommy, — hold me, and don't let me go yet. We 'll live to cut his heart out, Tommy, — we 'll live — we 'll" —

His head sank, and the rushing river, invisible to all eyes save his, leaped toward him out of the darkness, and bore him away, no longer to the darkness, but through it to the distant, peaceful, shining sea.

AN EPISODE OF FIDDLETOWN

In 1858 Fiddletown considered her a very pretty woman. She had a quantity of light chestnut hair, a good figure, a dazzling complexion, and a certain languid grace which passed easily for gentlewomanliness. She always dressed becomingly, and in what Fiddletown accepted as the latest fashion. She had only two blemishes: one of her velvety eyes, when examined closely, had a slight cast, and her left cheek bore a small scar left by a single drop of vitriol — happily the only drop of an entire phial thrown upon her by one of her own jealous sex that reached the pretty face it was intended to mar. But when the observer had studied the eyes sufficiently to notice this defect, he was generally incapacitated for criticism, and even the scar on her cheek was thought by some to add piquancy to her smile. The youthful editor of the Fiddletown "Avalanche" had said privately that it was "an exaggerated dimple." Colonel Starbottle was instantly "reminded of the beautifying patches of the days of Queen Anne, but more particularly, sir, of the blankest beautiful woman, that, blank you, you ever laid your two blank eyes upon. A creole woman, sir, in New Orleans. And this woman had a scar — a line extending, blank me, from her eye to her blank chin. And this woman, sir, thrilled you, sir, maddened you, sir, absolutely sent your blank soul to perdition with her blank fascination. And one day I said to her, 'Celeste, how in blank did you come by that beautiful scar, blank you?' And she said to me, 'Star, there is n't another white man that I 'd confide in but you, but I made that scar myself,

purposely, I did, blank me.' These were her very words, sir, and perhaps you think it a blank lie, sir, but I'll put up any blank sum you can name and prove it, blank me."

Indeed, most of the male population of Fiddletown were or had been in love with her. Of this number about one half believed that their love was returned, with the exception, possibly, of her own husband. He alone had been known to express skepticism.

The name of the gentleman who enjoyed this infelicitous distinction was Tretherick. He had been divorced from an excellent wife to marry this Fiddletown enchantress. She also had been divorced, but it was hinted that some previous experiences of hers in that legal formality had made it perhaps less novel and probably less sacrificial. I would not have it inferred from this that she was deficient in sentiment or devoid of its highest moral expression. Her intimate friend had written (on the occasion of her second divorce), "The cold world does not understand Clara yet," and Colonel Starbottle had remarked, blankly, that with the exception of a single woman in Opelousas Parish, Louisiana, she had more soul than the whole caboodle of them put together. Few indeed could read those lines entitled "Infelissimus," commencing, "Why waves no cypress o'er this brow," originally published in the "Avalanche" over the signature of "The Lady Clare," without feeling the tear of sensibility tremble on his eyelids, or the glow of virtuous indignation mantle his cheek at the low brutality and pitiable jocularity of the "Dutch Flat Intelligencer," which the next week had suggested the exotic character of the cypress and its entire absence from Fiddletown as a reasonable answer to the query.

Indeed, it was this tendency to elaborate her feelings in a metrical manner, and deliver them to the cold world through the medium of the newspapers, that first attracted the attention of Tretherick. Several poems descriptive of

the effects of California scenery upon a too sensitive soul, and of the vague yearnings for the infinite which an enforced study of the heartlessness of California society produced in the poetic breast, impressed Mr. Tretherick, who was then driving a six-mule freight wagon between Knight's Ferry and Stockton, to seek out the unknown poetess. Mr. Tretherick was himself dimly conscious of a certain hidden sentiment in his own nature, and it is possible that some reflections on the vanity of his pursuit — he supplied several mining camps with whiskey and tobacco — in conjunction with the dreariness of the dusty plain on which he habitually drove, may have touched some chord in sympathy with this sensitive woman. Howbeit, after a brief courtship — as brief as was consistent with some previous legal formalities — they were married, and Mr. Tretherick brought his blushing bride to Fiddletown, or "Fidèletown," as Mrs. T. preferred to call it in her poems.

The union was not a felicitous one. It was not long before Mr. Tretherick discovered that the sentiment he had fostered while freighting between Stockton and Knight's Ferry was different from that which his wife had evolved from the contemplation of California scenery and her own soul. Being a man of imperfect logic, this caused him to beat her, and she, being equally faulty in deduction, was impelled to a certain degree of unfaithfulness on the same premise. Then Mr. Tretherick began to drink, and Mrs. T. to contribute regularly to the columns of the "Avalanche." It was at this time that Colonel Starbottle discovered a similarity in Mrs. T.'s verse to the genius of Sappho, and pointed it out to the citizens of Fiddletown in a two-columned criticism, signed "A. S.," also published in the "Avalanche" and supported by extensive quotation. As the "Avalanche" did not possess a font of Greek type, the editor was obliged to reproduce the Leucadian numbers in the ordinary Roman letter, to the intense disgust of

Colonel Starbottle, and the vast delight of Fiddletown, who saw fit to accept the text as an excellent imitation of Choctaw — a language with which the Colonel, as a whilom resident of the Indian territories, was supposed to be familiar. Indeed, the next week's "Intelligencer" contained some vile doggerel, supposed to be an answer to Mrs. T.'s poem, ostensibly written by the wife of a Digger Indian chief, accompanied by a glowing eulogium signed "A. S. S."

The result of this jocularity was briefly given in a later copy of the "Avalanche." "An unfortunate *rencontre* took place on Monday last between the Hon. Jackson Flash, of the 'Dutch Flat Intelligencer,' and the well-known Colonel Starbottle of this place, in front of the Eureka Saloon. Two shots were fired by the parties without injury to either, although it is said that a passing Chinaman received fifteen buckshot in the calves of his legs from the Colonel's double-barreled shotgun which were not intended for him. John will learn to keep out of the way of Melican man's firearms hereafter. The cause of the affray is not known, although it is hinted that there is a lady in the case. The rumor that points to a well-known and beautiful poetess, whose lucubrations have often graced our columns, seems to gain credence from those that are posted."

Meanwhile the passiveness displayed by Tretherick under these trying circumstances was fully appreciated in the gulches. "The old man's head is level," said one long-booted philosopher. "Ef the Colonel kills Flash, Mrs. Tretherick is avenged; if Flash drops the Colonel, Tretherick is all right. Either way he's got a sure thing." During this delicate condition of affairs Mrs. Tretherick one day left her husband's home and took refuge at the Fiddletown Hotel, with only the clothes she had on her back. Here she stayed for several weeks, during which period it

is only justice to say that she bore herself with the strictest propriety.

It was a clear morning in early spring that Mrs. Tretherick, unattended, left the hotel and walked down the narrow street toward the fringe of dark pines which indicated the extreme limits of Fiddletown. The few loungers at that early hour were preoccupied with the departure of the Wingdam coach at the other extremity of the street, and Mrs. Tretherick reached the suburbs of the settlement without discomposing observation. Here she took a cross street or road running at right angles with the main thoroughfare of Fiddletown, and passing through a belt of woodland. It was evidently the exclusive and aristocratic avenue of the town; the dwellings were few, ambitious, and uninterrupted by shops. And here she was joined by Colonel Starbottle.

The gallant Colonel, notwithstanding that he bore the swelling port which usually distinguished him, — that his coat was tightly buttoned and his boots tightly fitting, and that his cane, hooked over his arm, swung jauntily, — was not entirely at his ease. Mrs. Tretherick, however, vouchsafed him a gracious smile and a glance of her dangerous eyes, and the Colonel, with an embarrassed cough and a slight strut, took his place at her side.

"The coast is clear," said the Colonel, "and Tretherick is over at Dutch Flat on a spree; there is no one in the house but a Chinaman, and you need fear no trouble from him. *I*," he continued, with a slight inflation of the chest that imperiled the security of his button, — "I will see that you are protected in the removal of your property."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you, and so disinterested," simpered the lady as they walked along. "It's so pleasant to meet some one who has a soul — some one to sympathize with in a community so hardened and heartless as this." And Mrs. Tretherick cast down her eyes, but not until they had wrought their perfect and accepted work upon her companion.

"Yes, certainly, of course," said the Colonel, glancing nervously up and down the street; "yes, certainly." Perceiving, however, that there was no one in sight or hearing, he proceeded at once to inform Mrs. Tretherick that the great trouble of his life, in fact, had been the possession of too much soul. That many women — as a gentleman she would excuse him, of course, from mentioning names — but many beautiful women had often sought his society, but, being deficient, madam, absolutely deficient in this quality, he could not reciprocate. But when two natures thoroughly in sympathy — despising alike the sordid trammels of a low and vulgar community and the conventional restraints of a hypocritical society — when two souls in perfect accord met and mingled in poetical union, then — but here the Colonel's speech, which had been remarkable for a certain whiskey-and-watery fluency, grew husky, almost inaudible, and decidedly incoherent. Possibly Mrs. Tretherick may have heard something like it before, and was enabled to fill the hiatus. Nevertheless, the cheek that was on the side of the Colonel was quite virginal and bashfully conscious until they reached their destination.

It was a pretty little cottage, quite fresh and warm with paint, very pleasantly relieved against a platoon of pines, some of whose foremost files had been displaced to give freedom to the fenced inclosure in which it sat. In the vivid sunlight and perfect silence it had a new, uninhabited look, as if the carpenters and painters had just left it. At the farther end of the lot a Chinaman was stolidly digging, but there was no other sign of occupancy. "The coast," as the Colonel had said, was indeed "clear." Mrs. Tretherick paused at the gate. The Colonel would have entered with her, but was stopped by a gesture. "Come for me in a couple of hours, and I shall have everything packed," she said, as she smiled and extended her hand. The Colonel seized and pressed it with great fervor. Perhaps the pres-

sure was slightly returned, for the gallant Colonel was impelled to inflate his chest and trip away as smartly as his stubby-toed, high-heeled boots would permit. When he had gone, Mrs. Tretherick opened the door, listened a moment in the deserted hall, and then ran quickly upstairs to what had been her bedroom.

Everything there was unchanged as on the night she left it. On the dressing-table stood her bandbox, as she remembered to have left it when she took out her bonnet. On the mantel lay the other glove she had forgotten in her flight. The two lower drawers of the bureau were half open, — she had forgotten to shut them, — and on its marble top lay her shawl-pin and a soiled cuff. What other recollections came upon her I know not, but she suddenly grew quite white, shivered, and listened with a beating heart and her hand upon the door. Then she stepped to the mirror, and half fearfully, half curiously, parted with her fingers the braids of her blonde hair above her little pink ear, until she came upon an ugly, half-healed scar. She gazed at this, moving her pretty head up and down to get a better light upon it, until the slight cast in her velvety eyes became very strongly marked indeed. Then she turned away with a light, reckless, foolish laugh, and ran to the closet where hung her precious dresses. These she inspected nervously, and, missing suddenly a favorite black silk from its accustomed peg for a moment, thought she should have fainted. But discovering it the next instant, lying upon a trunk where she had thrown it, a feeling of thankfulness to a Superior Being who protects the friendless for the first time sincerely thrilled her. Then, albeit she was hurried for time, she could not resist trying the effect of a certain lavender neck-ribbon, upon the dress she was wearing, before the mirror. Suddenly she became aware of a child's voice close beside her and she stopped. And then the child's voice repeated, "Is it mamma?"

Mrs. Tretherick faced quickly about. Standing in the doorway was a little girl of six or seven. Her dress had been originally fine, but was torn and dirty, and her hair, which was a very violent red, was tumbled serio-comically about her forehead. For all this she was a picturesque little thing, even through whose childish timidity there was a certain self-sustained air which is apt to come upon children who are left much to themselves. She was holding under her arm a rag doll, apparently of her own workmanship and nearly as large as herself — a doll with a cylindrical head and features roughly indicated with charcoal. A long shawl, evidently belonging to a grown person, dropped from her shoulders and swept the floor.

The spectacle did not excite Mrs. Tretherick's delight. Perhaps she had but a small sense of humor. Certainly, when the child, still standing in the doorway, again asked, "Is it mamma?" she answered sharply, "No, it is n't," and turned a severe look upon the intruder.

The child retreated a step, and then, gaining courage with the distance, said, in deliciously imperfect speech, —

"Dow 'way, then; why don't you dow away?"

But Mrs. Tretherick was eyeing the shawl. Suddenly she whipped it off the child's shoulders and said angrily, —

"How dared you take my things, you bad child?"

"Is it yours? Then you are my mamma! ain't you? You are mamma!" she continued gleefully, and before Mrs. Tretherick could avoid her she had dropped her doll, and, catching the woman's skirts with both hands, was dancing up and down before her.

"What 's your name, child?" said Mrs. Tretherick coldly, removing the small and not very white hands from her garments.

"Tarry."

"Tarry?"

"Yeth. Tarry. Tarowline."

"Caroline?"

"Yeth. Tarowline Tretherick."

"Whose child *are* you?" demanded Mrs. Tretherick still more coldly, to keep down a rising fear.

"Why, yours," said the little creature with a laugh. "I 'm your little durl. You 're my mamma — my new mamma — don't you know my ole mamma's dorn away, never to tum back any more. I don't live wid my ole mamma now. I live wid you and papa."

"How long have you been here?" asked Mrs. Tretherick snappishly.

"I think it 's free days," said Carry reflectively.

"You think! don't you know?" sneered Mrs. Tretherick. "Then where did you come from?"

Carry's lip began to work under this sharp cross-examination. With a great effort and a small gulp she got the better of it, and answered, —

"Papa — papa fetched me — from Miss Simmons — from Sacramento, last week."

"Last week! you said three days just now," returned Mrs. Tretherick with severe deliberation.

"I mean a monf," said Carry, now utterly adrift in sheer helplessness and confusion.

"Do you know what you are talking about?" demanded Mrs. T. shrilly, restraining an impulse to shake the little figure before her and precipitate the truth by specific gravity.

But the flaming red head here suddenly disappeared in the folds of Mrs. Tretherick's dress, as if it were trying to extinguish itself forever.

"There now, stop that sniffling," said Mrs. Tretherick, extricating her dress from the moist embraces of the child, and feeling exceedingly uncomfortable. "Wipe your face now and run away and don't bother. Stop," she continued, as Carry moved away, "where 's your papa?"

"He 's dorn away too. He 's sick. He 's been dorn" — she hesitated — "two — free — days."

"Who takes care of you, child?" said Mrs. T., eyeing her curiously.

"John, the Chinaman. I tresses myselth; John tooks and makes the beds."

"Well, now, run away and behave yourself, and don't bother me any more," said Mrs. Tretherick, remembering the object of her visit. "Stop, where are you going?" she added, as the child began to ascend the stairs, dragging the long doll after her by one helpless leg.

"Doin' upstairs to play and be dood, and not bother mamma."

"I ain't your mamma," shouted Mrs. Tretherick, and then she swiftly reëntered her bedroom and slammed the door.

Once inside, she drew forth a large trunk from the closet, and set to work with querulous and fretful haste to pack her wardrobe. She tore her best dress in taking it from the hook on which it hung; she scratched her soft hands twice with an ambushed pin. All the while she kept up an indignant commentary on the events of the past few moments. She said to herself she saw it all. Tretherick had sent for this child of his first wife — this child for whose existence he had never seemed to care — just to insult her — to fill her place. Doubtless the first wife herself would follow soon, or perhaps there would be a third. Red hair — not auburn, but *red* — of course the child — this Caroline — looked like its mother, and if so she was anything but pretty. Or the whole thing had been prepared — this red-haired child — the image of its mother — had been kept at a convenient distance at Sacramento, ready to be sent for when needed. She remembered his occasional visits there — on business, as he said. Perhaps the mother already was there — but no — she had gone east. Nevertheless Mrs. Tretherick, in her then

state of mind, preferred to dwell upon the fact that she might be there. She was dimly conscious also of a certain satisfaction in exaggerating her feelings. Surely no woman had ever been so shamefully abused. In fancy she sketched a picture of herself sitting alone and deserted, at sunset, among the fallen columns of a ruined temple, in a melancholy yet graceful attitude, while her husband drove rapidly away in a luxurious coach and four, with a red-haired woman at his side. Sitting upon the trunk she had just packed, she partly composed a lugubrious poem, describing her sufferings as, wandering alone and poorly clad, she came upon her husband and "another" flaunting in silks and diamonds. She pictured herself dying of consumption, brought on by sorrow — a beautiful wreck, yet still fascinating, gazed upon adoringly by the editor of the "Avalanche" and Colonel Starbottle. And where was Colonel Starbottle all this while? why did n't he come? He at least understood her. He — she laughed the reckless, light laugh of a few moments before, and then her face suddenly grew grave, as it had not a few moments before.

What was that little red-haired imp doing all this time? Why was she so quiet? She opened the door noiselessly and listened. She fancied that she heard, above the multitudinous small noises and creakings and warpings of the vacant house, a smaller voice singing on the floor above. This, as she remembered, was only an open attic that had been used as a store-room. With a half-guilty consciousness she crept softly upstairs, and, pushing the door partly open, looked within.

Athwart the long, low-studded attic a slant sunbeam from a single small window lay, filled with dancing motes and only half illuminating the barren, dreary apartment. In the ray of this sunbeam she saw the child's glowing hair, as if crowned by a red aureole, as she sat upon the floor with her exaggerated doll between her knees. She appeared

to be talking to it, and it was not long before Mrs. Tretherick observed that she was rehearsing the interview of a half-hour before. She catechised the doll severely, cross-examining it in regard to the duration of its stay there, and generally on the measure of time. The imitation of Mrs. T.'s manner was exceedingly successful, and the conversation almost a literal reproduction, with a single exception. After she had informed the doll that she was not her mother, at the close of the interview, she added pathetically, "That if she was dood — very dood — she might be her mamma and love her very much."

I have already hinted that Mrs. Tretherick was deficient in a sense of humor. Perhaps it was for this reason that this whole scene affected her most unpleasantly, and the conclusion sent the blood tingling to her cheek. There was something, too, inconceivably lonely in the situation; the unfurnished vacant room, half light, the monstrous doll, whose very size seemed to give a pathetic significance to its speechlessness, the smallness of the one animate self-centred figure — all these touched more or less deeply the half-poetic sensibilities of the woman. She could not help utilizing the impression as she stood there, and thought what a fine poem might be constructed from this material, if the room were a little darker, the child lonelier — say, sitting beside a dead mother's bier and the wind wailing in the turrets. And then she suddenly heard footsteps at the door below, and recognized the sound of the Colonel's cane.

She flew swiftly down the stairs and encountered the Colonel in the hall. Here she poured into his astonished ear a voluble and exaggerated statement of her discovery and indignant recital of her wrongs. "Don't tell me the whole thing was n't arranged beforehand; for I know it was!" she almost screamed. "And think," she added, "of the heartlessness of the wretch — leaving his own child alone here in that way."

"It's a blank shame!" stammered the Colonel, without the least idea of what he was talking about. In fact, utterly unable as he was to comprehend a reason for the woman's excitement with his estimate of her character, I fear he showed it more plainly than he intended. He stammered, expanded his chest, looked stern, gallant, tender, but all unintelligently. Mrs. Tretherick for an instant experienced a sickening doubt of the existence of natures in perfect affinity.

"It's of no use," said Mrs. Tretherick with sudden vehemence, in answer to some inaudible remark of the Colonel's, and withdrawing her hand from the fervent grasp of that ardent and sympathetic man. "It's of no use; my mind is made up. You can send for my trunk as soon as you like, but *I* shall stay here and confront that man with the proof of his vileness. I will put him face to face with his infamy."

I do not know whether Colonel Starbottle thoroughly appreciated the convincing proof of Tretherick's unfaithfulness and malignity afforded by the damning evidence of the existence of Tretherick's own child in his own house. He was dimly aware, however, of some unforeseen obstacle to the perfect expression of the infinite longing of his own sentimental nature. But before he could say anything, Carry appeared on the landing above them, looking timidly and yet half critically at the pair.

"That's her," said Mrs. Tretherick excitedly. In her deepest emotions, either in verse or prose, she rose above a consideration of grammatical construction.

"Ah!" said the Colonel, with a sudden assumption of parental affection and jocularity that was glaringly unreal and affected. "Ah! pretty little girl, pretty little girl! how do you do? how are you? you find yourself pretty well, do you, pretty little girl?" The Colonel's impulse also was to expand his chest and swing his cane, until it

occurred to him that this action might be ineffective with a child of six or seven. Carry, however, took no immediate notice of this advance, but further discomposed the chivalrous Colonel by running quickly to Mrs. Tretherick, and hiding herself, as if for protection, in the folds of her gown. Nevertheless, the Colonel was not vanquished. Falling back into an attitude of respectful admiration, he pointed out a marvelous resemblance to the "Madonna and Child." Mrs. Tretherick simpered, but did not dislodge Carry as before. There was an awkward pause for a moment, and then Mrs. Tretherick, motioning significantly to the child, said in a whisper, "Go, now. Don't come here again, but meet me to-night at the hotel." She extended her hand; the Colonel bent over it gallantly, and, raising his hat, the next moment was gone.

"Do you think," said Mrs. Tretherick, with an embarrassed voice and a prodigious blush, looking down and addressing the fiery curls just visible in the folds of her dress, — "do you think you will be 'dood' if I let you stay in here and sit with me?"

"And let me call you mamma?" queried Carry, looking up.

"And let you call me mamma!" assented Mrs. Tretherick with an embarrassed laugh.

"Yeth," said Carry promptly.

They entered the bedroom together. Carry's eye instantly caught sight of the trunk.

"Are you doin' away adain, mamma?" she said with a quick, nervous look, and a clutch at the woman's dress.

"No-o," said Mrs. Tretherick, looking out of the window.

"Only playing you 're doin' away," suggested Carry with a laugh. "Let me play too."

Mrs. T. assented. Carry flew into the next room, and presently reappeared, dragging a small trunk, into which she gravely proceeded to pack her clothes. Mrs. T.

noticed that they were not many. A question or two regarding them brought out some further replies from the child, and before many minutes had elapsed Mrs. Tretherick was in possession of all her earlier history. But to do this Mrs. Tretherick had been obliged to take Carry upon her lap, pending the most confidential disclosures. They sat thus a long time after Mrs. Tretherick had apparently ceased to be interested in Carry's disclosures, and, when lost in thought, she allowed the child to rattle on unheeded, and ran her fingers through the scarlet curls.

"You don't hold me right, mamma," said Carry at last, after one or two uneasy shiftings of position.

"How should I hold you?" asked Mrs. Tretherick, with a half-amused, half-embarrassed laugh.

"This way," said Carry, curling up into position with one arm around Mrs. Tretherick's neck and her cheek resting on her bosom; "this way — there!" After a little preparatory nestling, not unlike some small animal, she closed her eyes and went to sleep.

For a few moments the woman sat silent, scarcely daring to breathe, in that artificial attitude. And then, whether from some occult sympathy in the touch, or God best knows what, a sudden fancy began to thrill her. She began by remembering an old pain that she had forgotten, an old horror that she had resolutely put away all these years. She recalled days of sickness and distrust, days of an overshadowing fear, days of preparation for something that was to be prevented — that *was* prevented, with mortal agony and fear. She thought of a life that might have been — she dared not say *had* been — and wondered! It was six years ago; if it had lived it would have been as old as Carry. The arms which were folded loosely around the sleeping child began to tremble and tighten their clasp. And then the deep potential impulse came, and with a half-

sob, half-sigh, she threw her arms out and drew the body of the sleeping child down, down into her breast, — down again and again as if she would hide it in the grave dug there years before. And the gust that shook her passed, and then, ah me! the rain.

A drop or two fell upon the curls of Carry, and she moved uneasily in her sleep. But the woman soothed her again, — it was *so* easy to do it now, — and they sat there quiet and undisturbed, — so quiet that they might have seemed incorporate of the lonely silent house, the slowly declining sunbeams, and the general air of desertion and abandonment, yet a desertion that had in it nothing of age, decay, or despair.

Colonel Starbottle waited at the Fiddletown Hotel all that night in vain. And the next morning when Mr. Tretherick returned to his husks, he found the house vacant and untenanted except by motes and sunbeams.

When it was fairly known that Mrs. Tretherick had run away, taking Mr. Tretherick's own child with her, there was some excitement and much diversity of opinion in Fiddletown. The "Dutch Flat Intelligencer" openly alluded to the "forcible abduction" of the child with the same freedom and, it is to be feared, the same prejudice with which it had criticised the abductor's poetry. All of Mrs. Tretherick's own sex, and perhaps a few of the opposite sex whose distinctive quality was not, however, very strongly indicated, fully coincided in the views of the "Intelligencer." The majority, however, evaded the moral issue; that Mrs. Tretherick had shaken the red dust of Fiddletown from her dainty slippers was enough for them to know. They mourned the loss of the fair abductor more than her offense. They promptly rejected Tretherick as an injured husband and disconsolate father, and even went so far as to openly cast discredit in the sincerity of his grief. They

reserved an ironical condolence for Colonel Starbottle, overbearing that excellent man with untimely and demonstrative sympathy in bar-rooms, saloons, and other localities not generally deemed favorable to the display of sentiment. "She was alliz a skittish thing, Kernel," said one sympathizer, with a fine affectation of gloomy concern and great readiness of illustration, "and it 's kinder nat'ril thet she 'd get away some day and stampede that theer colt; but thet she should shake *you*, Kernel, thet she should just shake you — is what gits me. And they do say thet you jist hung around thet hotel all night, and paytrolled them corridors, and histed yourself up and down them stairs, and meandered in and out o' thet piazzy, and all for nothing!" It was another generous and tenderly commiserating spirit that poured additional oil and wine on the Colonel's wounds. "The boys yer let on thet Mrs. Tretherick prevailed on ye to pack her trunk and a baby over from the house to the stage offis, and that the chap ez did go off with her thanked you and offered you two short bits, and sed ez how he liked your looks and 'ud employ you agin — and now you say it ain't so? Well — I 'll tell the boys it ain't so, and I 'm glad I met you, for stories *do* get round."

Happily for Mrs. Tretherick's reputation, however, the Chinaman in Tretherick's employment, who was the only eye-witness of her flight, stated that she was unaccompanied except by the child. He further deposed that obeying her orders he had stopped the Sacramento coach and secured a passage for herself and child to San Francisco. It was true that Ah Fe's testimony was of no legal value. But nobody doubted it. Even those who were skeptical of the Pagan's ability to recognize the sacredness of the truth admitted his passionless, unprejudiced unconcern. But it would appear from an hitherto unrecorded passage of this veracious chronicle that herein they were mistaken.

It was about six months after the disappearance of Mrs

Tretherick that Ah Fe, while working in Tretherick's lot, was hailed by two passing Chinamen. They were the ordinary mining coolies, equipped with long poles and baskets for their usual pilgrimages. An animated conversation at once ensued between Ah Fe and his brother Mongolians, — a conversation characterized by that usual shrill volubility and apparent animosity which was at once the delight and scorn of the intelligent Caucasian who did not understand a word of it. Such, at least, was the feeling with which Mr. Tretherick on his veranda, and Colonel Starbottle, who was passing, regarded their heathenish jargon. The gallant Colonel simply kicked them out of his way; the irate Tretherick with an oath threw a stone at the group and dispersed them — but not before one or two slips of yellow rice paper marked with hieroglyphics were exchanged, and a small parcel put into Ah Fe's hand. When Ah Fe opened this, in the dim solitude of his kitchen, he found a little girl's apron, freshly washed, ironed, and folded. On the corner of the hem were the initials "C. T." Ah Fe tucked it away in a corner of his blouse, and proceeded to wash his dishes in the sink with a smile of guileless satisfaction.

Two days after this Ah Fe confronted his master. "Me no likee Fiddletown. Me belly sick. Me go now." Mr. Tretherick violently suggested a profane locality. Ah Fe gazed at him placidly, and withdrew.

Before leaving Fiddletown, however, he accidentally met Colonel Starbottle and dropped a few incoherent phrases which apparently interested that gentleman. When he concluded, the Colonel handed him a letter and a twenty-dollar gold-piece. "If you bring me an answer I'll double that. *Sabe*, John?" Ah Fe nodded. An interview equally accidental, with precisely the same result, took place between Ah Fe and another gentleman, whom I suspect to have been the youthful editor of the "Avalanche." Yet I regret to state

that after proceeding some distance on his journey, Ah Fe calmly broke the seals of both letters, and after trying to read them upside down and sideways, finally divided them into accurate squares, and in this condition disposed of them to a brother Celestial whom he met on the road for a trifling gratuity. The agony of Colonel Starbottle on finding his wash-bill made out on the unwritten side of one of these squares, and delivered to him with his weekly clean clothes, and the subsequent discovery that the remaining portions of his letter were circulated by the same method from the Chinese laundry of one Fung Ti of Fiddletown, has been described to me as peculiarly affecting. Yet I am satisfied that a higher nature, rising above the levity induced by the mere contemplation of the insignificant details of this breach of trust, would find ample retributive justice in the difficulties that subsequently attended Ah Fe's pilgrimage.

On the road to Sacramento he was twice playfully thrown from the top of the stage-coach by an intelligent but deeply intoxicated Caucasian, whose moral nature was shocked at riding with one addicted to opium smoking. At Hangtown he was beaten by a passing stranger, purely an act of Christian supererogation. At Dutch Flat he was robbed by well-known hands from unknown motives. At Sacramento he was arrested on suspicion of being something or other, and discharged with a severe reprimand — possibly for not being it, and so delaying the course of justice. At San Francisco he was freely stoned by children of the public schools; but by carefully avoiding these monuments of enlightened progress, he at last reached in comparative safety the Chinese quarters, where his abuse was confined to the police and limited by the strong arm of the law.

The next day he entered the wash-house of Chy Fook as an assistant, and on the following Friday was sent with a basket of clean clothes to Chy Fook's several clients.

It was the usual foggy afternoon as he climbed the long

wind-swept hill of California Street, one of those bleak gray intervals that made the summer a misnomer to any but the liveliest San Franciscan fancy. There was no warmth nor color in earth or sky; no light nor shade within or without, only one monotonous, universal neutral tint over everything. There was a fierce unrest in the wind-whipped streets, there was a dreary vacant quiet in the gray houses. When Ah Fe reached the top of the hill the Mission ridge was already hidden, and the chill sea-breeze made him shiver. As he put down his basket to rest himself, it is possible that to his defective intelligence and heathen experience this "God's own climate," as it was called, seemed to possess but scant tenderness, softness, or mercy. But it is possible that Ah Fe illogically confounded this season with his old persecutors, the school-children, who, being released from studious confinement, at this hour were generally most aggressive. So he hastened on, and, turning a corner, at last stopped before a small house.

It was the usual San Franciscan urban cottage. There was the little strip of cold green shrubbery before it, the chilly bare veranda, and above this again the grim balcony on which no one sat. Ah Fe rang the bell; a servant appeared, glanced at his basket, and reluctantly admitted him as if he were some necessary domestic animal. Ah Fe silently mounted the stairs, and, entering the open door of the front chamber, put down the basket and stood passively on the threshold.

A woman, who was sitting in the cold gray light of the window, with a child in her lap, rose listlessly and came toward him. Ah Fe instantly recognized Mrs. Tretherick, but not a muscle of his immobile face changed, nor did his slant eyes lighten as he met her own placidly. She evidently did not recognize him as she began to count the clothes. But the child, curiously examining him, suddenly uttered a short glad cry: —

"Why, it's John! Mamma, it's our old John what we had in Fiddletown."

For an instant Ah Fe's eyes and teeth electrically lightened. The child clapped her hands and caught at his blouse. Then he said shortly, "Me John — Ah Fe — allee same. Me know you. How do?"

Mrs. Tretherick dropped the clothes nervously and looked hard at Ah Fe. Wanting the quick-witted instinct of affection that sharpened Carry's perception, she even then could not distinguish him above his fellows. With a recollection of past pain and an obscure suspicion of impending danger, she asked him when he had left Fiddletown.

"Longee time. No likee Fiddletown, no likee Tlevelick. Likee San Flisco. Likee washee. Likee Tally."

Ah Fe's laconics pleased Mrs. Tretherick. She did not stop to consider how much an imperfect knowledge of English added to his curt directness and sincerity. But she said, "Don't tell anybody you have seen me," and took out her pocket-book.

Ah Fe, without looking at it, saw that it was nearly empty. Ah Fe, without examining the apartment, saw that it was scantily furnished. Ah Fe, without removing his eyes from blank vacancy, saw that both Mrs. Tretherick and Carry were poorly dressed. Yet it is my duty to state that Ah Fe's long fingers closed promptly and firmly over the half-dollar which Mrs. Tretherick extended to him.

Then he began to fumble in his blouse with a series of extraordinary contortions. After a few moments he extracted from apparently no particular place a child's apron, which he laid upon the basket with the remark —

"One piece washman flagittee."

Then he began anew his fumblings and contortions. At last his efforts were rewarded by his producing, apparently from his right ear, a many-folded piece of tissue-paper. Unwrapping this carefully, he at last disclosed two

twenty-dollar gold-pieces, which he handed to Mrs. Tretherick.

"You leavee money top side of blulow, Fiddletown, me findee money. Me fetchee money to you. All lightee."

"But I left no money on the top of the bureau, John," said Mrs. Tretherick earnestly. "There must be some mistake; it belongs to some other person. Take it back, John."

Ah Fe's brow darkened. He drew away from Mrs. Tretherick's extended hand and began hastily to gather up his basket.

"Me no takee back. No, no. Bimeby pleesman he catchee me! He say, 'God damn thief — catchee flowty dollar — come to jailee.' Me no takee back. You leavee money top side blulow, Fiddletown. Me fetchee money you. Me no takee back."

Mrs. Tretherick hesitated. In the confusion of her flight she *might* have left the money in the manner he had said. In any event she had no right to jeopardize this honest Chinaman's safety by refusing it. So she said, "Very well, John, I will keep it. But you must come again and see me" — here Mrs. T. hesitated with a new and sudden revelation of the fact that any man could wish to see any other than herself — "and, and — Carry!"

Ah Fe's face lightened. He even uttered a short ventriloquistic laugh without moving his mouth. Then shouldering his basket he shut the door carefully, and slid quietly downstairs. In the lower hall he, however, found an unexpected difficulty in opening the front door, and after fumbling vainly at the lock for a moment, looked around for some help or instruction. But the Irish handmaid who had let him in was contemptuously oblivious of his needs and did not appear.

There occurred a mysterious and painful incident which I shall simply record without attempting to explain. On the hall table a scarf, evidently the property of the servant

before alluded to, was lying. As Ah Fe tried the lock with one hand, the other rested lightly on the table. Suddenly, and apparently of its own volition, the scarf began to creep slowly towards Ah Fe's hand. From Ah Fe's hand it began to creep up his sleeve, slowly and with an insinuating, snake-like motion, and then disappeared somewhere in the recesses of his blouse. Without betraying the least interest or concern in this phenomenon, Ah Fe still repeated his experiments upon the lock. A moment later the tablecloth of red damask, moved by apparently the same mysterious impulse, slowly gathered itself under Ah Fe's fingers, and sinuously disappeared by the same hidden channel. What further mystery might have followed I cannot say, for at this moment Ah Fe discovered the secret of the lock, and was enabled to open the door coincident with the sound of footsteps upon the kitchen stairs. Ah Fe did not hasten his movements, but, patiently shouldering his basket, closed the door carefully behind him again, and stepped forth into the thick encompassing fog that now shrouded earth and sky.

From her high casement window Mrs. Tretherick watched Ah Fe's figure until it disappeared in the gray cloud. In her present loneliness she felt a keen sense of gratitude towards him, and may have ascribed to the higher emotions and the consciousness of a good deed that certain expansiveness of the chest and swelling of the bosom that was really due to the hidden presence of the scarf and tablecloth under his blouse; for Mrs. Tretherick was still poetically sensitive. As the gray fog deepened into night she drew Carry closer towards her, and above the prattle of the child pursued a vein of sentimental and egotistic recollection at once bitter and dangerous. The sudden apparition of Ah Fe linked her again with her past life at Fiddletown. Over the dreary interval between she was now wandering, — a journey so piteous, willful, thorny, and useless that it was no wonder that at last Carry stopped suddenly in the midst of

her voluble confidences to throw her small arms around the woman's neck and bid her not to cry.

Heaven forefend that I should use a pen that should be ever dedicated to an exposition of unalterable moral principle to transcribe Mrs. Tretherick's own theory of this interval and episode, with its feeble palliations, its illogical deductions, its fond excuses and weak apologies. It would seem, however, that her experience had been hard. Her slender stock of money was soon exhausted. At Sacramento she found that the composition of verse, although appealing to the highest emotion of the human heart, and compelling the editorial breast to the noblest commendation in the editorial pages, was singularly inadequate to defray the expenses of herself and Carry. Then she tried the stage, but failed signally. Possibly her conception of the passions was different from that which obtained with a Sacramento audience, but it was certain that her charming presence, so effective at short range, was not sufficiently pronounced for the footlights. She had admirers enough in the green-room, but awakened no abiding affection among the audience. In this strait it occurred to her that she had a voice — a contralto of no very great compass or cultivation, but singularly sweet and touching, and she finally obtained a position in a church choir. She held it for three months, greatly to her pecuniary advantage, and, it is said, much to the satisfaction of the gentlemen in the back pews who faced towards her during the singing of the last hymn.

I remember her quite distinctly at this time. The light that slanted through the oriel of St. Dives's choir was wont to fall tenderly on her beautiful head with its stacked masses of deerskin-colored hair, on the low black arches of her brows, and to deepen the pretty fringes that shaded her eyes of Genoa velvet. Very pleasant it was to watch the opening and shutting of that small straight mouth, with its quick revelation of the little white teeth, and to see the

foolish blood faintly deepen her satin cheek as you watched; for Mrs. Tretherick was very sweetly conscious of admiration, and, like most pretty women, gathered herself under your eye like a racer under the spur.

And then, of course, there came trouble. I have it from the soprano — a little lady who possessed even more than the usual unprejudiced judgment of her sex — that Mrs. Tretherick's conduct was simply shameful; that her conceit was unbearable; that if she considered the rest of the choir as slaves, she, the soprano, would like to know it; that her conduct on Easter Sunday with the basso had attracted the attention of the whole congregation, and that she herself had noticed Dr. Cope twice look up during the service; that her — the soprano's — friends had objected to her singing in the choir with a person who had been on the stage, but she had waived this. Yet she had it from the best authority that Mrs. Tretherick had run away from her husband, and that this red-haired child who sometimes came in the choir was not her own. The tenor confided to me, behind the organ, that Mrs. Tretherick had a way of sustaining a note at the end of a line, in order that her voice might linger longer with the congregation, — an act that could be attributed only to a defective moral nature; that as a man, — he was a very popular dry-goods clerk on week-days, and sang a good deal from apparently behind his eyebrows on the Sabbath, — that as a man, sir, he would put up with it no longer. The basso alone — a short German with a heavy voice, for which he seemed reluctantly responsible, and rather grieved at its possession — stood up for Mrs. Tretherick and averred that they were jealous of her because she was "bretty." The climax was at last reached in an open quarrel, wherein Mrs. Tretherick used her tongue with such precision of statement and epithet that the soprano burst into hysterical tears, and had to be supported from the choir by her husband and the tenor. This

act was marked intentionally to the congregation by the omission of the usual soprano solo. Mrs. Tretherick went home flushed with triumph, but on reaching her room frantically told Carry that they were beggars henceforward; that she — her mother — had just taken the very bread out of her darling's mouth, and ended by bursting into a flood of penitent tears. They did not come so quickly as in her old poetical days, but when they came they stung deeply. She was roused by a formal visit from a vestryman, — one of the Music Committee. Mrs. Tretherick dried her long lashes, put on a new neck ribbon, and went down to the parlor. She stayed there two hours, — a fact that might have occasioned some remark but that the vestryman was married and had a family of grown-up daughters. When Mrs. Tretherick returned to her room, she sang to herself in the glass and scolded Carry. But she retained her place in the choir.

It was not long, however. In due course of time her enemies received a powerful addition to their forces in the committeeman's wife. That lady called upon several of the church members and on Dr. Cope's family. The result was that at a later meeting of the Music Committee Mrs. Tretherick's voice was declared inadequate to the size of the building, and she was invited to resign. She did so. She had been out of a situation for two months, and her scant means were almost exhausted when Ah Fe's unexpected treasure was tossed into her lap.

The gray fog deepened into night, and the street lamps started into shivering life, as, absorbed in these unprofitable memories, Mrs. Tretherick still sat drearily at her window. Even Carry had slipped away unnoticed, and her abrupt entrance with the damp evening paper in her hand roused Mrs. Tretherick, and brought her back to an active realization of the present. For Mrs. Tretherick was wont to scan the advertisements, in the faint hope of finding some avenue

of employment — she knew not what — open to her needs, and Carry had noted this habit.

Mrs. Tretherick mechanically closed the shutters, lit the lights, and opened the paper. Her eye fell instinctively on the following paragraph in the telegraphic column : —

"Fiddletown, 7th. Mr. James Tretherick, an old resident of this place, died last night of delirium tremens. Mr. Tretherick was addicted to intemperate habits, said to have been induced by domestic trouble."

Mrs. Tretherick did not start. She quietly turned over another page of the paper and glanced at Carry. The child was absorbed in a book. Mrs. Tretherick uttered no word, but during the remainder of the evening was unusually silent and cold. When Carry was undressed and in bed, Mrs. Tretherick suddenly dropped on her knees beside the bed, and, taking Carry's flaming head between her hands, said, —

"Should you like to have another papa, Carry, darling ?"

"No," said Carry, after a moment's thought.

"But a papa to help mamma take care of you, — to love you, to give you nice clothes, to make a lady of you when you grow up ?"

Carry turned her sleepy eyes toward the questioner. "Should *you*, mamma ?"

Mrs. Tretherick suddenly flushed to the roots of her hair. "Go to sleep," she said sharply, and turned away.

But at midnight the child felt two white arms close tightly around her, and was drawn down into a bosom that heaved, fluttered, and at last was broken up by sobs.

"Don't ky, mamma," whispered Carry, with a vague retrospect of their recent conversation. "Don't ky. I fink I *should* like a new papa if he loved you very much — very, very much !"

A month afterwards, to everybody's astonishment, Mrs. Tretherick was married. The happy bridegroom was one Colonel Starbottle, recently elected to represent Calaveras

County in the legislative councils of the State. As I cannot record the event in finer language than that used by the correspondent of the "Sacramento Globe," I venture to quote some of his graceful periods. "The relentless shafts of the sly god have been lately busy among our gallant Solons. We quote 'one more unfortunate.' The latest victim is the Hon. C. Starbottle of Calaveras. The fair enchantress in the case is a beautiful widow, — a former votary of Thespis, and lately a fascinating St. Cecilia of one of the most fashionable churches of San Francisco, where she commanded a high salary."

The "Dutch Flat Intelligencer" saw fit, however, to comment upon the fact with that humorous freedom characteristic of an unfettered press. "The new democratic war-horse from Calaveras has lately advented in the Legislature with a little bill to change the name of Tretherick to Starbottle. They call it a marriage certificate down there. Mr. Tretherick has been dead just one month, but we presume the gallant Colonel is not afraid of ghosts."

It is but just to Mrs. Tretherick to state that the Colonel's victory was by no means an easy one. To a natural degree of coyness on the part of the lady was added the impediment of a rival, — a prosperous undertaker from Sacramento, who had first seen and loved Mrs. Tretherick at the theatre and church; his professional habits debarring him from ordinary social intercourse, and indeed any other than the most formal public contact with the sex. As this gentleman had made a snug fortune during the felicitous prevalence of a severe epidemic, the Colonel regarded him as a dangerous rival. Fortunately, however, the undertaker was called in professionally to lay out a brother senator who had unhappily fallen by the Colonel's pistol in an affair of honor, and either deterred by physical consideration from rivalry, or wisely concluding that the Colonel was professionally valuable, he withdrew from the field.

The honeymoon was brief, and brought to a close by an untoward incident. During their bridal trip Carry had been placed in the charge of Colonel Starbottle's sister. On their return to the city, immediately on reaching their lodgings, Mrs. Starbottle announced her intention of at once proceeding to Mrs. Culpepper's to bring the child home. Colonel Starbottle, who had been exhibiting for some time a certain uneasiness which he had endeavored to overcome by repeated stimulation, finally buttoned his coat tightly across his breast, and, after walking unsteadily once or twice up and down the room, suddenly faced his wife with his most imposing manner.

"I have deferred," said the Colonel, with an exaggeration of port that increased with his inward fear, and a growing thickness of speech, — "I have deferr— I may say poshponed statement o' fack thash my duty ter dishclose ter ye. I did no wish to mar su'shine mushal happ'ness — to bligh' bud o' promise, to darken conjuglar sky by unpleasht revelashun. Musht be done — by G—d, m'm, musht do it now. The chile is gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Mrs. Starbottle.

There was something in the tone of her voice, in the sudden drawing together of the pupils of her eyes, that for a moment nearly sobered the Colonel and partly collapsed his chest.

"I 'll 'splain all in a minit," he said, with a deprecating wave of the hand; "everything shall be 'splained. The-the-the-melencholly event wish preshipitate our happ'ness — the myster'us prov'nice wish releash you — releash chile! hunestan'? — releash chile. The mom't Tretherick die — all claim you have in chile through him — die too. Thash law. Whose chile b'long to? Tretherick? Tretherick dead. Chile can't b'long dead man. Damn nonshense b'long dead man. Ish your chile? No! Whos' chile then? Chile b'long to 'ts mother. Unnerstan'?"

"Where is she?" said Mrs. Starbottle, with a very white face and a very low voice.

"I 'll 'splain all. Chile b'long to 'ts mother. Thash law. I 'm lawyer, lesh'lator, and American sis'n. Ish my duty as lawyer, as lesh'lator, and 'Merikan sis'n to reshtore chile to suff'rin' mother at any coss — any coss."

"Where is she?" repeated Mrs. Starbottle, with her eyes still fixed on the Colonel's face.

"Gone to 'ts m'o'r. Gone East on shteamer yesserday. Waffed by fav'rin' gales to suff'rin p'rent. Thash so!"

Mrs. Starbottle did not move. The Colonel felt his chest slowly collapsing, but steadied himself against a chair, and endeavored to beam with chivalrous gallantry not unmixed with magisterial firmness upon her as she sat.

"Your feelin's, m'm, do honor to yer sex; but conshider situashun. Conshider m'or's feelin's — conshider *my* feelin's." The Colonel paused, and flourishing a white handkerchief placed it negligently in his breast, and then smiled tenderly above it, as over laces and ruffles, on the woman before him. "Why should dark shedder cass bligh' on two shouls with single beat? Chile 's fine chile, good chile, but summonelse chile! Chile 's gone, Clar'; but all ish n't gone, Clar'. Conshider, dearesht, you all's have me!"

Mrs. Starbottle started to her feet. "*You!*" she cried, bringing out a chest note that made the chandeliers ring. "You, that I married to give my darling food and clothes. *You!* a dog that I whistled to my side to keep the men off me! *You!*"

She choked up, and then dashed past him into the inner room, which had been Carry's; then she swept by him again into her own bedroom, and then suddenly reappeared before him erect, menacing, with a burning fire over her cheek-bones, a quick straightening of her arched brows and mouth, a squaring of her jaw, and an ophidian flattening of the head.

"Listen!" she said, in a hoarse, half-grown boy's voice. "Hear me! If you ever expect to set eyes on me again you must find the child. If you ever expect to speak to me again — to touch me — you must bring her back. For where she goes, I go — you hear me! — where she has gone, look for me!"

She struck out past him again, with a quick feminine throwing out of her arms from the elbows down, as if freeing herself from some imaginary bonds, and, dashing into her chamber, slammed and locked the door. Colonel Starbottle, although no coward, stood in superstitious fear of an angry woman, and recoiling as she swept by, lost his unsteady foothold and rolled helplessly on the sofa. Here, after one or two unsuccessful attempts to regain his foothold, he remained, uttering from time to time profane but not entirely coherent or intelligible protests, until at last he succumbed to the exhausting quality of his emotions, and the narcotic quantity of his potations.

Meantime, within, Mrs. Starbottle was excitedly gathering her valuables and packing her trunk, even as she had done once before in the course of this remarkable history. Perhaps some recollection of this was in her mind, for she stopped to lean her burning cheeks upon her hand, as if she saw again the figure of the child standing in the doorway, and heard once more a childish voice asking, "Is it mamma?" But the epithet now stung her to the quick, and with a quick, passionate gesture, she dashed it away with a tear that had gathered in her eye. And then it chanced that in turning over some clothes she came upon the child's slipper with a broken sandal-string. She uttered a great cry here, — the first she had uttered, — and caught it to her breast, kissing it passionately again and again, and rocking from side to side with a motion peculiar to her sex. And then she took it to the window, the better to see it through her now streaming eyes. Here she was taken with

a sudden fit of coughing that she could not stifle with the handkerchief she put to her feverish lips. And then she suddenly grew very faint, the window seemed to recede before her, the floor to sink beneath her feet, and staggering to the bed, she fell prone upon it with the sandal and handkerchief pressed to her breast. Her face was quite pale, the orbit of her eyes dark, and there was a spot upon her lip, another on her handkerchief, and still another on the white counterpane of the bed.

The wind had risen, rattling the window sashes and swaying the white curtains in a ghostly way. Later, a gray fog stole softly over the roofs, soothing the wind-roughened surfaces, and enwrapping all things in an uncertain light and a measureless peace. She lay there very quiet — for all her troubles, still a very pretty bride. And on the other side of the bolted door the gallant bridegroom, from his temporary couch, snored peacefully.

A week before Christmas Day, 1870, the little town of Genoa, in the State of New York, exhibited, perhaps more strongly than at any other time, the bitter irony of its founders and sponsors. A driving snowstorm, that had whitened every windward hedge, bush, wall, and telegraph pole, played around this soft Italian capital, whirled in and out of the great, staring, wooden Doric columns of its post-office and hotel, beat upon the cold green shutters of its best houses, and powdered the angular, stiff, dark figures in its streets. From the level of the street the four principal churches of the town stood out starkly, even while their misshapen spires were kindly hidden in the low driving storm. Near the railroad station the new Methodist chapel, whose resemblance to an enormous locomotive was further heightened by the addition of a pyramidal row of front steps, like a cowcatcher, stood as if waiting for a few more houses to be hitched on to proceed to a pleasanter location.

But the pride of Genoa — the great Crammer Institute for Young Ladies — stretched its bare brick length and reared its cupola plainly from the bleak Parnassian hill above the principal avenue. There was no evasion in the Crammer Institute of the fact that it was a public institution. A visitor upon its doorstep, a pretty face at its window, were clearly visible all over the township.

The shriek of the engine of the four o'clock Northern Express brought but few of the usual loungers to the depot. Only a single passenger alighted and was driven away in the solitary waiting sleigh towards the Genoa Hotel. And then the train sped away again, — with that passionate indifference to human sympathies or curiosity peculiar to express trains, — the one baggage truck was wheeled into the station again, the station door was locked, and the station master went home.

The locomotive whistle, however, awakened the guilty consciousness of three young ladies of the Crammer Institute, who were even then surreptitiously regaling themselves in the bake-shop and confectionery saloon of Mrs. Phillips, in a by-lane. For even the admirable regulations of the Institute failed to entirely develop the physical and moral natures of its pupils: they conformed to the excellent dietary rules in public, and in private drew upon the luxurious rations of their village caterer; they attended church with exemplary formality, and flirted informally during service with the village beaux; they received the best and most judicious instruction during school hours, and devoured the trashiest novels during recess. The result of which was an aggregation of quite healthy, quite human, and very charming young creatures, that reflected infinite credit on the Institute. Even Mrs. Phillips, to whom they owed vast sums, exhilarated by the exuberant spirits and youthful freshness of her guests, declared that the sight of "them young things" did her good, and had even been known to shield them by shameless equivocation.

"Four o'clock, girls! and if we're not back to prayers by five we'll be missed," said the tallest of these foolish virgins, with an aquiline nose and certain quiet *élan* that bespoke the leader, as she rose from her seat. "Have you got the books, Addy?" Addy displayed three dissipated-looking novels under her waterproof. "And the provisions, Carry?" Carry showed a suspicious parcel filling the pocket of her sack. "All right, then. Come, girls, trudge. Charge it," she added, nodding to her host, as they passed towards the door. "I'll pay you when my quarter's allowance comes."

"No, Kate," interposed Carry, producing her purse; "let me pay — it's my turn."

"Never!" said Kate, arching her black brows loftily; "even if you do have rich relatives and regular remittances from California. Never. Come, girls — forward, march!"

As they opened the door a gust of wind nearly took them off their feet. Kindhearted Mrs. Phillips was alarmed. "Sakes alive! gals, ye must n't go out in sich weather; better let me send word to the Institoot and make ye up a nice bed to-night in my parlor." But the last sentence was lost in a chorus of half-suppressed shrieks as the girls, hand in hand, ran down the steps into the storm, and were at once whirled away.

The short December day, unlit by any sunset glow, was failing fast. It was quite dark already, and the air was thick with driving snow. For some distance their high spirits, youth, and even inexperience kept them bravely up, but in ambitiously attempting a short cut from the high-road across an open field their strength gave out, the laugh grew less frequent, and tears began to stand in Carry's brown eyes. When they reached the road again they were utterly exhausted. "Let us go back," said Carry.

"We'd never get across that field again," said Addy.

"Let's stop at the first house, then," said Carry.

"The first house," said Addy, peering through the

gathering darkness, "is Squire Robinson's." She darted a mischievous glance at Carry that even in her discomfort and fear brought the quick blood to her cheek.

"Oh yes," said Kate with gloomy irony, "certainly, stop at the Squire's, by all means, and be invited to tea, and be driven home after tea by your dear friend Mr. Harry, with a formal apology from Mrs. Robinson, and hopes that the young ladies may be excused this time. No," continued Kate with sudden energy, "that may suit *you;* but I'm going back as I came, — by the window, — or not at all." Then she pounced suddenly, like a hawk, on Carry, who was betraying a tendency to sit down on a snowbank and whimper, and shook her briskly. "You'll be going to sleep next. Stay — hold your tongues, all of you — what's that?"

It was the sound of sleigh-bells. Coming down toward them out of the darkness was a sleigh with a single occupant. "Hold down your heads, girls, if it's anybody that knows us — we're lost." But it was not, for a voice strange to their ears, but withal very kindly and pleasant, asked if its owner could be of any help to them. As they turned toward him they saw it was a man wrapped in a handsome sealskin cloak, wearing a sealskin cap, his face, half concealed by a muffler of the same material, disclosing only a pair of long mustaches and two keen dark eyes. "It's a son of old Santa Claus," whispered Addy. The girls tittered audibly as they tumbled into the sleigh — they had regained their former spirits. "Where shall I take you?" said the stranger quietly. There was a hurried whispering, and then Kate said boldly, "To the Institute." They drove silently up the hill until the long ascetic building loomed up before them. The stranger reined up suddenly. "You know the way better than I," he said; "where do you go in?" "Through the back window," said Kate with sudden and appalling frankness. "I see!"

responded their strange driver quietly, and alighting quickly removed the bells from the horses. "We can drive as near as you please now," he added by way of explanation. "He certainly is a son of Santa Claus," whispered Addy; "had n't we better ask after his father?" "Hush," said Kate decidedly. "He is an angel, I dare say." She added with a delicious irrelevance, which was, however, perfectly understood by her feminine auditors, "We are looking like three frights."

Cautiously skirting the fences, they at last pulled up a few feet from a dark wall. The stranger proceeded to assist them to alight. There was still some light from the reflected snow, and as he handed his fair companions to the ground each was conscious of undergoing an intense though respectful scrutiny. He assisted them gravely to open the window, and then discreetly retired to the sleigh until the difficult and somewhat discomposing ingress was made. He then walked to the window. "Thank you and good-night," whispered three voices. A single figure still lingered. The stranger leaned over the window-sill. "Will you permit me to light my cigar here? it might attract attention if I struck a match outside." By the upspringing light he saw the figure of Kate very charmingly framed in by the window. The match burned slowly out in his fingers. Kate smiled mischievously. The astute young woman had detected the pitiable subterfuge. For what else did she stand at the head of her class, and for what else had doting parents paid three years' tuition?

The storm had passed, and the sun was shining quite cheerily in the eastern recitation-room the next morning, when Miss Kate, whose seat was nearest the window, placing her hand pathetically upon her heart, affected to fall in bashful and extreme agitation upon the shoulder of Carry, her neighbor. "*He* has come!" she gasped in a thrilling whisper. "Who?" asked Carry sympathetically,

who never clearly understood when Kate was in earnest. "Who? — why, the man who rescued us last night! I saw him drive to the door this moment. Don't speak — I shall be better in a moment; there!" she said, and the shameless hypocrite passed her hand pathetically across her forehead with a tragic air.

"What can he want?" asked Carry, whose curiosity was excited.

"I don't know," said Kate, suddenly relapsing into gloomy cynicism. "Possibly to put his five daughters to school. Perhaps to finish his young wife and warn her against us."

"He did n't look old, and he did n't seem like a married man," rejoined Addy thoughtfully.

"That was his art, you poor creature!" returned Kate scornfully; "you can never tell anything of these men — they are so deceitful. Besides, it 's just my fate!"

"Why, Kate" — began Carry, in serious concern.

"Hush, Miss Walker is saying something," said Kate, laughing.

"The young ladies will please give attention," said a slow perfunctory voice. "Miss Carry Tretherick is wanted in the parlor."

Meantime Mr. Jack Prince, the name given on the card and various letters and credentials submitted to the Rev. Mr. Crammer, paced the somewhat severe apartment known publicly as the "Reception Parlor," and privately to the pupils as "Purgatory." His keen eyes had taken in the various rigid details, from the flat steam "radiator" like an enormous japanned soda-cracker, that heated one end of the room, to the monumental bust of Dr. Crammer that hopelessly chilled the other; from the Lord's Prayer executed by a former writing-master in such gratuitous variety of elegant caligraphic trifling as to considerably abate the serious value of the composition, to three views

of Genoa from the Institute, which nobody ever recognized, taken on the spot by the drawing teacher; from two illuminated texts of Scripture in an English letter, so gratuitously and hideously remote as to chill all human interest, to a large photograph of the senior class, in which the prettiest girls were Ethiopian in complexion, and sat (apparently) on each other's heads and shoulders; — his fingers had turned listlessly the leaves of school catalogues, the Sermons of Dr. Crammer, the Poems of Henry Kirke White, the "Lays of the Sanctuary," and "Lives of Celebrated Women;" — his fancy, and it was a nervously active one, had gone over the partings and greetings that must have taken place here, and wondered why the apartment had yet caught so little of the flavor of humanity; — indeed, I am afraid he had almost forgotten the object of his visit when the door opened and Carry Tretherick stood before him.

It was one of those faces he had seen the night before, — prettier even than it had seemed then, — and yet I think he was conscious of some disappointment, without knowing exactly why. Her abundant waving hair was of a guinea-golden tint, her complexion of a peculiar flower-like delicacy, her brown eyes of the color of seaweed in deep water. It certainly was not her beauty that disappointed him.

Without possessing his sensitiveness to impression, Carry was, on her part, quite as vaguely ill at ease. She saw before her one of those men whom the sex would vaguely generalize as "nice," — that is to say, correct in all the superficial appointments of style, dress, manners, and feature; yet there was a decidedly unconventional quality about him — he was totally unlike anything or anybody that she could remember, and, as the attributes of originality are often as apt to alarm as to attract people, she was not entirely prepossessed in his favor.

"I can hardly hope," he began pleasantly, "that you

remember me. It is eleven years ago, and you were a very little girl. I am afraid I cannot even claim to have enjoyed that familiarity that might exist between a child of six and a young man of twenty-one. I don't think I was fond of children. But I knew your mother very well. I was editor of the 'Avalanche' in Fiddletown when she took you to San Francisco."

"You mean my stepmother; she was n't my mother, you know," interposed Carry hastily.

Mr. Prince looked at her curiously. "I mean your stepmother," he said gravely. "I never had the pleasure of meeting your mother."

"No, *mother* has n't been in California these twelve years."

There was an intentional emphasizing of the title and of its distinction, that began to coldly interest Prince after his first astonishment was past.

"As I come from your stepmother now," he went on, with a slight laugh, "I must ask you to go back for a few moments to that point. After your father's death, your mother — I mean your stepmother — recognized the fact that your mother, the first Mrs. Tretherick, was legally and morally your guardian, and, although much against her inclination and affections, placed you again in her charge."

"My stepmother married again within a month after father died, and sent me home," said Carry with great directness, and the faintest toss of her head.

Mr. Prince smiled so sweetly, and apparently so sympathetically, that Carry began to like him. With no other notice of the interruption he went on: "After your stepmother had performed this act of simple justice, she entered into an agreement with your mother to defray the expenses of your education until your eighteenth year, when you were to elect and choose which of the two should thereafter be your guardian, and with whom you would make your

home. This agreement, I think, you are already aware of, and I believe knew at the time."

"I was a mere child then," said Carry.

"Certainly," said Mr. Prince with the same smile; "still the conditions, I think, have never been oppressive to you nor your mother, and the only time they are likely to give you the least uneasiness will be when you come to make up your mind in the choice of your guardian. That will be on your eighteenth birthday, — the 20th, I think, of the present month."

Carry was silent.

"Pray do not think that I am here to receive your decision, even if it be already made. I only came to inform you that your stepmother, Mrs. Starbottle, will be in town to-morrow, and will pass a few days at the hotel. If it is your wish to see her before you make up your mind, she will be glad to meet you. She does not, however, wish to do anything to influence your judgment."

"Does mother know she is coming?" said Carry hastily.

"I do not know," said Prince gravely. "I only know that if you conclude to see Mrs. Starbottle, it will be with your mother's permission. Mrs. Starbottle will keep sacredly this part of the agreement, made ten years ago. But her health is very poor, and the change and country quiet of a few days may benefit her." Mr. Prince bent his keen, bright eyes upon the young girl, and almost held his breath until she spoke again.

"Mother's coming up to-day or to-morrow," she said, looking up.

"Ah!" said Mr. Prince, with a sweet and languid smile.

"Is Colonel Starbottle here too?" asked Carry after a pause.

"Colonel Starbottle is dead; your stepmother is again a widow."

"Dead!" repeated Carry.

"Yes," replied Mr. Prince, "your stepmother has been singularly unfortunate in surviving her affections."

Carry did not know what he meant, and looked so. Mr. Prince smiled reassuringly.

Presently Carry began to whimper.

Mr. Prince softly stepped beside her chair.

"I am afraid," he said, with a very peculiar light in his eye, and a singular dropping of the corners of his mustache, — "I am afraid you are taking this too deeply. It will be some days before you are called upon to make a decision. Let us talk of something else. I hope you caught no cold last evening."

Carry's face shone out again in dimples.

"You must have thought us so queer! It was too bad to give you so much trouble."

"None whatever, I assure you. My sense of propriety," he added demurely, "which might have been outraged had I been called upon to help three young ladies out of a schoolroom window at night, was deeply gratified at being able to assist them in again." The door-bell rang loudly, and Mr. Prince rose. "Take your own time, and think well before you make your decision." But Carry's ear and attention were given to the sound of voices in the hall. At the same moment the door was thrown open and a servant announced, "Mrs. Tretherick and Mr. Robinson."

The afternoon train had just shrieked out its usual indignant protest at stopping at Genoa at all, as Mr. Jack Prince entered the outskirts of the town and drove towards his hotel. He was wearied and cynical; a drive of a dozen miles through unpicturesque outlying villages, past small economic farmhouses and hideous villas that violated his fastidious taste, had, I fear, left that gentleman in a captious state of mind. He would have even avoided his taciturn landlord as he drove up to the door, but that functionary waylaid him on the steps. "There 's a lady in the sittin'-

room waitin' for ye." Mr. Prince hurried upstairs and entered the room as Mrs. Starbottle flew towards him.

She had changed sadly in the last ten years. Her figure was wasted to half its size; the beautiful curves of her bust and shoulders were broken or inverted; the once full, rounded arm was shrunken in its sleeve, and the golden hoops that encircled her wan wrists almost slipped from her hands as her long, scant fingers closed convulsively around Jack's. Her cheek-bones were painted that afternoon with the hectic of fever; somewhere in the hollows of those cheeks were buried the dimples of long ago, but their graves were forgotten; her lustrous eyes were still beautiful, though the orbits were deeper than before; her mouth was still sweet, although the lips parted more easily over the little teeth, and even in breathing, and showed more of them than she was wont to do before. The glory of her blonde hair was still left; it was finer, more silken and ethereal, yet it failed even in its plenitude to cover the hollows of the blue-veined temples.

"Clara," said Jack reproachfully.

"Oh, forgive me, Jack," she said, falling into a chair, but still clinging to his hand, — "forgive me, dear, but I could not wait longer. I should have died, Jack, died before another night. Bear with me a little longer, — it will not be long, — but let me stay. I may not see her, I know — I shall not speak to her — but it 's so sweet to feel that I am at last near her — that I breathe the same air with my darling — I am better already, Jack, I am indeed. And you have seen her to-day? How did she look? what did she say? — tell me all — everything, Jack. Was she beautiful? they say she is! Has she grown? Would you have known her again? Will she come, Jack? Perhaps she has been here already — perhaps" — she had risen with tremulous excitement, and was glancing at the door, — "perhaps she is here now. Why don't you speak, Jack? tell me all."

The keen eyes that looked down into hers were glistening with an infinite tenderness that none perhaps but she would have deemed them capable of. "Clara," he said gently and cheerily, "try and compose yourself. You are trembling now with the fatigue and excitement of your journey. I have seen Carry — she is well and beautiful! Let that suffice you now."

His gentle firmness composed and calmed her now as it had often done before. Stroking her thin hand, he said after a pause, "Did Carry ever write to you?"

"Twice — thanking me for some presents; they were only schoolgirl letters," she added, nervously answering the interrogation of his eyes.

"Did she ever know of your own troubles? of your poverty? of the sacrifices you made to pay her bills? of your pawning your clothes and jewels? of your" —

"No, no," interrupted the woman quickly, "no! How could she? I have no enemy cruel enough to tell her that."

"But if she — or if Mrs. Tretherick — had heard of it? If Carry thought you were poor and unable to support her properly, it might influence her decision. Young girls are fond of the position that wealth can give. She may have rich friends — maybe a lover."

Mrs. Starbottle winced at the last sentence. "But," she said eagerly, grasping Jack's hand, "when you found me sick and helpless at Sacramento; when you — God bless you for it, Jack! — offered to help me to the East, you said you knew of something — you had some plan — that would make me and Carry independent."

"Yes," said Jack hastily, "but I want you to get strong and well first. And now that you are calmer, you shall listen to my visit to the school."

It was then that Mr. Jack Prince proceeded to describe the interview already recorded with a singular felicity and

discretion that shames my own account of that proceeding. Without suppressing a single fact, without omitting a word or detail, he yet managed to throw a poetic veil over that prosaic episode, — to invest the heroine with a romantic roseate atmosphere, which, though not perhaps entirely imaginary, still I fear exhibited that genius which ten years ago had made the columns of the "Fiddletown Avalanche" at once fascinating and instructive. It was not until he saw the heightening color, and heard the quick breathing of his eager listener, that he felt a pang of self-reproach. "God help her and forgive me," he muttered between his clenched teeth, "but how can I tell her *all* now!"

That night when Mrs. Starbottle laid her weary head upon her pillow she tried to picture to herself Carry at the same moment sleeping peacefully in the great schoolhouse on the hill, and it was a rare comfort to this yearning, foolish woman to know that she was so near. But at this moment Carry was sitting on the edge of her bed, half undressed, pouting her pretty lips, and twisting her long, leonine locks between her fingers, as Miss Kate Van Corlear, dramatically wrapped in a long white counterpane, her black eyes sparkling, and her thoroughbred nose thrown high in the air, stood over her like a wrathful and indignant ghost; for Carry had that evening imparted her woes and her history to Miss Kate, and that young lady had "proved herself no friend," by falling into a state of fiery indignation over Carry's "ingratitude," and openly and shamelessly espousing the claims of Mrs. Starbottle. "Why, if the half you tell me is true, your mother and those Robinsons are making of you not only a little coward, but a little snob, miss. Respectability, forsooth! Look you! my family are centuries before the Trethericks, but if my family had ever treated me in this way, and then asked me to turn my back on my best friend, I'd whistle them down the wind!" and here Kate snapped her fingers, bent

her black brows, and glared around the room, as if in search of a recreant Van Corlear.

"You just talk this way because you have taken a fancy to that Mr. Prince," said Carry.

In the debasing slang of the period that had even found its way into the virgin cloisters of the Crammer Institute, Miss Kate, as she afterwards expressed it, instantly "went for her."

First, with a shake of her head she threw her long black hair over one shoulder, then dropping one end of the counterpane from the other like a vestal tunic, she stepped before Carry with a purposely exaggerated classic stride. "And what if I have, miss? What if I happen to know a gentleman when I see him? What if I happen to know that among a thousand such traditional, conventional, feeble editions of their grandfathers as Mr. Harry Robinson, you cannot find one original, independent, individualized gentleman like your Prince! Go to bed, miss! and pray to Heaven that he may be *your* Prince indeed! Ask to have a contrite and grateful heart, and thank the Lord in particular for having sent you such a friend as Kate Van Corlear!" Yet, after an imposing dramatic exit, she reappeared the next moment as a straight white flash, kissed Carry between the brows, and was gone.

The next day was a weary one to Jack Prince. He was convinced in his mind that Carry would not come, yet to keep this consciousness from Mrs. Starbottle, to meet her simple hopefulness with an equal degree of apparent faith, was a hard and difficult task. He would have tried to divert her mind by taking her on a long drive, but she was fearful that Carry might come during her absence, and her strength, he was obliged to admit, had failed greatly. As he looked into her large and awe-inspiring clear eyes, a something he tried to keep from his mind — to put off day by day from contemplation — kept asserting itself directly

to his inner consciousness. He began to doubt the expediency and wisdom of his management; he recalled every incident of his interview with Carry, and half believed that its failure was due to himself. Yet Mrs. Starbottle was very patient and confident; her very confidence shook his faith in his own judgment. When her strength was equal to the exertion, she was propped up in her chair by the window, where she could see the school and the entrance to the hotel. In the intervals she would elaborate pleasant plans for the future, and would sketch a country home. She had taken a strange fancy, as it seemed to Prince, to the present location, but it was notable that the future always thus outlined was one of quiet and repose. She believed she would get well soon; in fact she thought she was now much better than she had been, but it might be long before she should be quite strong again. She would whisper on in this way until Jack would dash madly down into the bar-room, order liquors that he did not drink, light cigars that he did not smoke, talk with men that he did not listen to, and behave generally as our stronger sex is apt to do in periods of delicate trials and perplexity.

The day closed with a clouded sky and a bitter searching wind. With the night fell a few wandering flakes of snow. She was still content and hopeful, and as Jack wheeled her from the window to the fire, she explained to him how that, as the school-term was drawing near its close, Carry was probably kept closely at her lessons during the day, and could only leave the school at night. So she sat up the greater part of the evening and combed her silken hair, and as far as her strength would allow made an undress toilette to receive her guest. "We must not frighten the child, Jack," she said apologetically and with something of her old coquetry.

It was with a feeling of relief that, at ten o'clock, Jack received a message from the landlord, saying that the

doctor would like to see him for a moment downstairs." As Jack entered the grim, dimly lighted parlor, he observed the hooded figure of a woman near the fire. He was about to withdraw again, when a voice that he remembered very pleasantly said, —

"Oh, it's all right. I'm the doctor."

The hood was thrown back, and Prince saw the shining black hair, and black, audacious eyes, of Kate Van Corlear.

"Don't ask any question. I'm the doctor, and there's my prescription," and she pointed to the half-frightened, half-sobbing Carry in the corner; "to be taken at once!"

"Then Mrs. Tretherick has given her permission?"

"Not much, if I know the sentiments of that lady," replied Kate saucily.

"Then how did you get away?" asked Prince gravely.

"By the window."

When Mr. Prince had left Carry in the arms of her stepmother, he returned to the parlor.

"Well?" demanded Kate.

"She will stay — *you* will, I hope, also, to-night."

"As I shall not be eighteen and my own mistress on the 20th, and as I haven't a sick stepmother, I won't."

"Then you will give me the pleasure of seeing you safely through the window again?"

When Mr. Prince returned an hour later, he found Carry sitting on a low stool at Mrs. Starbottle's feet. Her head was in her stepmother's lap, and she had sobbed herself to sleep. Mrs. Starbottle put her finger to her lip. "I told you she would come. God bless you, Jack, and good-night."

The next morning Mrs. Tretherick, indignant, the Rev. Asa Crammer, Principal, injured, and Mr. Joel Robinson, Senior, complacently respectable, called upon Mr. Prince. There was a stormy meeting, ending in a demand for

Carry. "We certainly cannot admit of this interference," said Mrs. Tretherick, a fashionably dressed indistinctive-looking woman; "it is several days before the expiration of our agreement, and we do not feel, under the circumstances, justified in releasing Mrs. Starbottle from its conditions." "Until the expiration of the school-term, we must consider Miss Tretherick as complying entirely with its rules and discipline," interposed Dr. Crammer. "The whole proceeding is calculated to injure the prospects and compromise the position of Miss Tretherick in society," suggested Mr. Robinson.

In vain Mr. Prince urged the failing condition of Mrs. Starbottle, her absolute freedom from complicity with Carry's flight, the pardonable and natural instincts of the girl, and his own assurance that they were willing to abide by her decision. And then, with a rising color in his cheek, a dangerous look in his eye, but a singular calmness in his speech, he added, —

"One word more. It becomes my duty to inform you of a circumstance which would certainly justify me, as an executor of the late Mr. Tretherick, in fully resisting your demands. A few months after Mr. Tretherick's death, through the agency of a Chinaman in his employment it was discovered that he had made a will, which was subsequently found among his papers. The insignificant value of his bequest — mostly land, then quite valueless — prevented his executors from carrying out his wishes, or from even proving the will, or making it otherwise publicly known, until within the last two or three years, when the property has enormously increased in value. The provisions of that bequest are simple, but unmistakable. The property is divided between Carry and her stepmother, with the explicit condition that Mrs. Starbottle shall become her legal guardian, provide for her education, and in all details stand to her *in loco parentis*."

"What is the value of this bequest?" asked Mr. Robinson. "I cannot tell exactly, but not far from half a million, I should say," returned Prince. "Certainly, with this knowledge, as a friend of Miss Tretherick, I must say that her conduct is as judicious as it is honorable to her," responded Mr. Robinson. "I shall not presume to question the wishes or throw any obstacles in the way of carrying out the intentions of my dead husband," added Mrs. Tretherick, and the interview was closed.

When its result was made known to Mrs. Starbottle, she raised Jack's hand to her feverish lips. "It cannot add to *my* happiness now, Jack; but tell me, why did you keep it from her?" Jack smiled, but did not reply.

Within the next week the necessary legal formalities were concluded, and Carry was restored to her stepmother. At Mrs. Starbottle's request a small house in the outskirts of the town was procured, and thither they removed to wait the spring and Mrs. Starbottle's convalescence. Both came tardily that year.

Yet she was happy and patient. She was fond of watching the budding of the trees beyond her window, — a novel sight to her Californian experience, — and of asking Carry their names and seasons. Even at this time she projected for that summer, which seemed to her so mysteriously withheld, long walks with Carry through the leafy woods whose gray, misty ranks she could see along the hilltop. She even thought she could write poetry about them, and recalled the fact as evidence of her gaining strength; and there is, I believe, still treasured by one of the members of this little household, a little carol, so joyous, so simple, and so innocent that it might have been an echo of the robin that called to her from the window, as perhaps it was.

And then, without warning, there dropped from heaven a day so tender, so mystically soft, so dreamily beautiful, so throbbing and alive with the fluttering of invisible wings, so

replete and bounteously overflowing with an awakening and joyous resurrection not taught by man or limited by creed, that they thought it fit to bring her out and lay her in that glorious sunshine that sprinkled like the droppings of a bridal torch the happy lintels and doors. And there she lay, beatified and calm.

Wearied by watching, Carry had fallen asleep by her side, and Mrs. Starbottle's thin fingers lay like a benediction on her head. Presently she called Jack to her side.

"Who was that?" she whispered; "who just came in?"

"Miss Van Corlear," said Jack, answering the look in her great hollow eyes.

"Jack," she said after a moment's silence, "sit by me a moment, dear Jack; I've something I must say. If I ever seemed hard or cold or coquettish to you in the old days, it was because I loved you, Jack, too well to mar your future by linking it with my own. I always loved you, dear Jack, even when I seemed least worthy of you. That is gone now; but I had a dream lately, Jack, a foolish woman's dream, that you might find what I lacked in *her*," and she glanced lovingly at the sleeping girl at her side; "that you might love her as you have loved me. But even that is not to be, Jack — is it?" and she glanced wistfully in his face. Jack pressed her hand, but did not speak. After a few moments' silence she again said, "Perhaps you are right in your choice. She is a good-hearted girl, Jack — but a little bold."

And with this last flicker of foolish, weak humanity in her struggling spirit, she spoke no more. When they came to her a moment later, a tiny bird that had lit upon her breast flew away, and the hand that they lifted from Carry's head fell lifeless at her side.

A PASSAGE IN THE LIFE OF MR. JOHN OAKHURST

He always thought it must have been Fate. Certainly nothing could have been more inconsistent with his habits than to have been in the Plaza at seven o'clock of that midsummer morning. The sight of his colorless face in Sacramento was rare at that season, and indeed at any season, anywhere, publicly, before two o'clock in the afternoon. Looking back upon it in after years, in the light of a chanceful life, he determined, with the characteristic philosophy of his profession, that it must have been Fate.

Yet it is my duty, as a strict chronicler of facts, to state that Mr. Oakhurst's presence there that morning was due to a very simple cause. At exactly half past six, the bank being then a winner to the amount of twenty thousand dollars, he had risen from the faro-table, relinquished his seat to an accomplished assistant, and withdrawn quietly, without attracting a glance from the silent, anxious faces bowed over the table. But when he entered his luxurious sleeping-room, across the passageway, he was a little shocked at finding the sun streaming through an inadvertently opened window. Something in the rare beauty of the morning, perhaps something in the novelty of the idea, struck him as he was about to close the blinds, and he hesitated. Then, taking his hat from the table, he stepped down a private staircase into the street.

The people who were abroad at that early hour were of a class quite unknown to Mr. Oakhurst. There were milkmen and hucksters delivering their wares, small

tradespeople opening their shops, housemaids sweeping doorsteps, and occasionally a child. These Mr. Oakhurst regarded with a certain cold curiosity, perhaps quite free from the cynical disfavor with which he generally looked upon the more pretentious of his race whom he was in the habit of meeting. Indeed, I think he was not altogether displeased with the admiring glances which these humble women threw after his handsome face and figure, conspicuous even in a country of fine-looking men. While it is very probable that this wicked vagabond, in the pride of his social isolation, would have been coldly indifferent to the advances of a fine lady, a little girl who ran admiringly by his side in a ragged dress had the power to call a faint flush into his colorless cheek. He dismissed her at last, but not until she had found out — what sooner or later her large-hearted and discriminating sex inevitably did — that he was exceedingly free and open-handed with his money, and also — what perhaps none other of her sex ever did — that the bold black eyes of this fine gentleman were in reality of a brownish and even tender gray.

There was a small garden before a white cottage in a side-street that attracted Mr. Oakhurst's attention. It was filled with roses, heliotrope, and verbena, — flowers familiar enough to him in the expensive and more portable form of bouquets, but, as it seemed to him then, never before so notably lovely. Perhaps it was because the dew was yet fresh upon them, perhaps it was because they were unplucked, but Mr. Oakhurst admired them, not as a possible future tribute to the fascinating and accomplished Miss Ethelinda, then performing at the Varieties, for Mr. Oakhurst's especial benefit, as she had often assured him; nor yet as a *douceur* to the enthralling Miss Montmorrissy, with whom Mr. Oakhurst expected to sup that evening, but simply for himself, and mayhap for the flowers' sake. Howbeit, he passed on, and so out into the open plaza, where,

finding a bench under a cottonwood-tree, he first dusted the seat with his handkerchief, and then sat down.

It was a fine morning. The air was so still and calm that a sigh from the sycamores seemed like the deep-drawn breath of the just awakening tree, and the faint rustle of its boughs as the outstretching of cramped and reviving limbs. Far away the Sierras stood out against a sky so remote as to be of no positive color,— so remote that even the sun despaired of ever reaching it, and so expended its strength recklessly on the whole landscape, until it fairly glittered in a white and vivid contrast. With a very rare impulse, Mr. Oakhurst took off his hat, and half reclined on the bench, with his face to the sky. Certain birds who had taken a critical attitude on a spray above him apparently began an animated discussion regarding his possible malevolent intentions. One or two, emboldened by the silence, hopped on the ground at his feet, until the sound of wheels on the gravel walk frightened them away.

Looking up, he saw a man coming slowly towards him, wheeling a nondescript vehicle in which a woman was partly sitting, partly reclining. Without knowing why, Mr. Oakhurst instantly conceived that the carriage was the invention and workmanship of the man, partly from its oddity, partly from the strong, mechanical hand that grasped it, and partly from a certain pride and visible consciousness in the manner in which the man handled it. Then Mr. Oakhurst saw something more, — the man's face was familiar. With that regal faculty of not forgetting a face that had ever given him professional audience, he instantly classified it under the following mental formula: "At 'Frisco, Polka Saloon. Lost his week's wages. I reckon seventy dollars — on red. Never came again." There was, however, no trace of this in the calm eyes and unmoved face that he turned upon the stranger, who, on the contrary, blushed, looked embarrassed, hesitated, and then stopped with an involun-

tary motion that brought the carriage and its fair occupant face to face with Mr. Oakhurst.

I should hardly do justice to the position she will occupy in this veracious chronicle by describing the lady now — if, indeed, I am able to do it at all. Certainly, the popular estimate was conflicting. The late Colonel Starbottle — to whose large experience of a charming sex I have before been indebted for many valuable suggestions — had, I regret to say, depreciated her fascinations. "A yellow-faced cripple, by dash — a sick woman, with mahogany eyes. One of your blanked spiritual creatures, with no flesh on her bones." On the other hand, however, she enjoyed later much complimentary disparagement from her own sex. Miss Celestina Howard, second leader in the ballet at the Varieties, had, with great alliterative directness, in after years, denominated her as an "aquiline asp." Mlle. Brimborion remembered that she had always warned "Mr. Jack" that this woman would "empoison" him. But Mr. Oakhurst, whose impressions are perhaps the most important, only saw a pale, thin, deep-eyed woman, raised above the level of her companion by the refinement of long suffering and isolation, and a certain shy virginity of manner. There was a suggestion of physical purity in the folds of her fresh-looking robe, and a certain picturesque tastefulness in the details, that, without knowing why, made him think that the robe was her invention and handiwork, even as the carriage she occupied was evidently the work of her companion. Her own hand, a trifle too thin, but well-shaped, subtle-fingered, and gentlewomanly, rested on the side of the carriage, the counterpart of the strong mechanical grasp of her companion's.

There was some obstruction to the progress of the vehicle, and Mr. Oakhurst stepped forward to assist. While the wheel was being lifted over the curbstone, it was necessary that she should hold his arm, and for a moment her thin

hand rested there, light and cold as a snowflake, and then — as it seemed to him — like a snowflake melted away. Then there was a pause, and then conversation — the lady joining occasionally and shyly.

It appeared that they were man and wife. That for the past two years she had been a great invalid, and had lost the use of her lower limbs from rheumatism. That until lately she had been confined to her bed, until her husband — who was a master carpenter — had bethought himself to make her this carriage. He took her out regularly for an airing before going to work, because it was his only time, and — they attracted less attention. They had tried many doctors, but without avail. They had been advised to go to the Sulphur Springs, but it was expensive. Mr. Decker, the husband, had once saved eighty dollars for that purpose, but while in San Francisco had his pocket picked — Mr. Decker was so senseless. (The intelligent reader need not be told that it is the lady who is speaking.) They had never been able to make up the sum again, and they had given up the idea. It was a dreadful thing to have one's pocket picked. Did he not think so?

Her husband's face was crimson, but Mr. Oakhurst's countenance was quite calm and unmoved, as he gravely agreed with her, and walked by her side until they passed the little garden that he had admired. Here Mr. Oakhurst commanded a halt, and, going to the door, astounded the proprietor by a preposterously extravagant offer for a choice of the flowers. Presently he returned to the carriage with his arms full of roses, heliotrope, and verbena, and cast them in the lap of the invalid. While she was bending over them with childish delight, Mr. Oakhurst took the opportunity of drawing her husband aside.

"Perhaps," he said in a low voice, and a manner quite free from any personal annoyance, — "perhaps it 's just as well that you lied to her as you did. You can say now that

the pickpocket was arrested the other day, and you got your money back." Mr. Oakhurst quietly slipped four twenty-dollar gold-pieces into the broad hand of the bewildered Mr. Decker. "Say that — or anything you like — but the truth. Promise me you won't say that!"

The man promised. Mr. Oakhurst quietly returned to the front of the little carriage. The sick woman was still eagerly occupied with the flowers, and as she raised her eyes to his, her faded cheek seemed to have caught some color from the roses, and her eyes some of their dewy freshness. But at that instant Mr. Oakhurst lifted his hat, and before she could thank him was gone.

I grieve to say that Mr. Decker shamelessly broke his promise. That night, in the very goodness of his heart and uxorious self-abnegation, he, like all devoted husbands, not only offered himself, but his friend and benefactor, as a sacrifice on the family altar. It is only fair, however, to add that he spoke with great fervor of the generosity of Mr. Oakhurst, and dealt with an enthusiasm quite common with his class on the mysterious fame and prodigal vices of the gambler.

"And now, Elsie, dear, say that you 'll forgive me," said Mr. Decker, dropping on one knee beside his wife's couch. "I did it for the best. It was for you, dearey, that I put that money on them cards that night in 'Frisco. I thought to win a heap, — enough to take you away, and enough left to get you a new dress."

Mrs. Decker smiled and pressed her husband's hand. "I do forgive you, Joe, dear," she said, still smiling, with eyes abstractedly fixed on the ceiling; "and you ought to be whipped for deceiving me so, you bad boy, and making me make such a speech. There, say no more about it. If you 'll be very good hereafter, and will just now hand me that cluster of roses, I 'll forgive you." She took the branch in her fingers, lifted the roses to her face, and presently said, behind their leaves, —

"Joe!"

"What is it, lovey?"

"Do you think that this Mr. — what do you call him? — Jack Oakhurst would have given that money back to you if I had n't made that speech?"

"Yes."

"If he had n't seen me at all?"

Mr. Decker looked up. His wife had managed in some way to cover up her whole face with the roses, except her eyes, which were dangerously bright.

"No; it was you, Elsie — it was all along of seeing you that made him do it."

"A poor sick woman like me?"

"A sweet, little, lovely, pooty Elsie — Joe's own little wifey! How could he help it?"

Mrs. Decker fondly cast one arm around her husband's neck, still keeping the roses to her face with the other. From behind them she began to murmur gently and idiotically, "Dear, ole square Joey. Elsie's oney booful big bear." But, really, I do not see that my duty as a chronicler of facts compels me to continue this little lady's speech any further, and out of respect to the unmarried reader I stop.

Nevertheless, the next morning Mrs. Decker betrayed some slight and apparently uncalled-for irritability on reaching the plaza, and presently desired her husband to wheel her back home. Moreover, she was very much astonished at meeting Mr. Oakhurst just as they were returning, and even doubted if it were he, and questioned her husband as to his identity with the stranger of yesterday as he approached. Her manner to Mr. Oakhurst, also, was quite in contrast with her husband's frank welcome. Mr. Oakhurst instantly detected it. "Her husband has told her all, and she dislikes me," he said to himself, with that fatal appreciation of the half-truths of a woman's motives that causes

the wisest masculine critic to stumble. He lingered only long enough to take the business address of the husband, and then, lifting his hat gravely, without looking at the lady, went his way. It struck the honest master carpenter as one of the charming anomalies of his wife's character that, although the meeting was evidently very much constrained and unpleasant, instantly afterward his wife's spirits began to rise. "You was hard on him — a leetle hard, was n't you, Elsie?" said Mr. Decker deprecatingly. "I 'm afraid he may think I 've broke my promise." "Ah, indeed," said the lady indifferently. Mr. Decker instantly stepped round to the front of the vehicle. "You look like an A 1 first-class lady riding down Broadway in her own carriage, Elsie," said he; "I never seed you lookin' so peart and sassy before."

A few days later the proprietor of the San Isabel Sulphur Springs received the following note in Mr. Oakhurst's well-known dainty hand: —

DEAR STEVE, — I 've been thinking over your proposition to buy Nichols's quarter interest and have concluded to go in. But I don't see how the thing will pay until you have more accommodation down there, and for the best class — I mean *my* customers. What we want is an extension to the main building, and two or three cottages put up. I send down a builder to take hold of the job at once. He takes his sick wife with him, and you are to look after them as you would for one of us.

I may run down there myself, after the races, just to look after things; but I sha'n't set upon any game this season. Yours always,

JOHN OAKHURST.

It was only the last sentence of this letter that provoked criticism. "I can understand," said Mr. Hamlin, a pro-

fessional brother, to whom Mr. Oakhurst's letter was shown, — "I can understand why Jack goes in heavy and builds, for it's a sure spec, and is bound to be a mighty soft thing in time, if he comes here regularly. But why in blank he don't set up a bank this season and take the chance of getting some of the money back that he puts into circulation in building, is what gets me. I wonder now," he mused deeply, "what *is* his little game."

The season had been a prosperous one to Mr. Oakhurst, and proportionally disastrous to several members of the Legislature, judges, colonels, and others who had enjoyed but briefly the pleasure of Mr. Oakhurst's midnight society. And yet Sacramento had become very dull to him. He had lately formed a habit of early morning walks, — so unusual and startling to his friends, both male and female, as to occasion the intensest curiosity. Two or three of the latter set spies upon his track, but the inquisition resulted only in the discovery that Mr. Oakhurst walked to the plaza, sat down upon one particular bench for a few moments, and then returned without seeing anybody, and the theory that there was a woman in the case was abandoned. A few superstitious gentlemen of his own profession believed that he did it for "luck." Some others, more practical, declared that he went out to "study points."

After the races at Marysville, Mr. Oakhurst went to San Francisco; from that place he returned to Marysville, but a few days after was seen at San José, Santa Cruz, and Oakland. Those who met him declared that his manner was restless and feverish, and quite unlike his ordinary calmness and phlegm. Colonel Starbottle pointed out the fact that at San Francisco, at the Club, Jack had declined to deal. "Hand shaky, sir — depend upon it; don't stimulate enough — blank him!"

From San José he started to go to Oregon by land with a rather expensive outfit of horses and camp equipage, but

on reaching Stockton he suddenly diverged, and four hours later found him, with a single horse, entering the cañon of the San Isabel Warm Sulphur Springs.

It was a pretty triangular valley lying at the foot of three sloping mountains, dark with pines and fantastic with madroño and manzanita. Nestling against the mountain-side, the straggling buildings and long piazza of the hotel glittered through the leaves; and here and there shone a white toy-like cottage. Mr. Oakhurst was not an admirer of nature, but he felt something of the same novel satisfaction in the view that he experienced in his first morning walk in Sacramento. And now carriages began to pass him on the road filled with gayly dressed women, and the cold California outlines of the landscape began to take upon themselves somewhat of a human warmth and color. And then the long hotel piazza came in view, efflorescent with the full-toileted fair. Mr. Oakhurst, a good rider after the California fashion, did not check his speed as he approached his destination, but charged the hotel at a gallop, threw his horse on his haunches within a foot of the piazza, and then quietly emerged from the cloud of dust that veiled his dismounting.

Whatever feverish excitement might have raged within, all his habitual calm returned as he stepped upon the piazza. With the instinct of long habit he turned and faced the battery of eyes with the same cold indifference with which he had for years encountered the half-hidden sneers of men and the half-frightened admiration of women. Only one person stepped forward to welcome him. Oddly enough, it was Dick Hamilton, perhaps the only one present who, by birth, education, and position, might have satisfied the most fastidious social critic. Happily for Mr. Oakhurst's reputation, he was also a very rich banker and social leader. "Do you know who that is you spoke to?" asked young Parker, with an alarmed expression. "Yes,"

replied Hamilton, with characteristic effrontery; "the man you lost a thousand dollars to last week. *I* only know him *socially*." "But is n't he a gambler?" queried the youngest Miss Smith. "He is," replied Hamilton; "but I wish, my dear young lady, that we all played as open and honest a game as our friend yonder, and were as willing as he is to abide by its fortunes."

But Mr. Oakhurst was happily out of hearing of this colloquy, and was even then lounging listlessly, yet watchfully, along the upper hall. Suddenly he heard a light footstep behind him, and then his name called in a familiar voice that drew the blood quickly to his heart. He turned, and she stood before him.

But how transformed! If I have hesitated to describe the hollow-eyed cripple, — the quaintly dressed artisan's wife, a few pages ago, — what shall I do with this graceful, shapely, elegantly attired gentlewoman into whom she has been merged within these two months? In good faith, she was very pretty. You and I, my dear madam, would have been quick to see that those charming dimples were misplaced for true beauty, and too fixed in their quality for honest mirthfulness; that the delicate lines around those aquiline nostrils were cruel and selfish; that the sweet, virginal surprise of those lovely eyes was as apt to be opened on her plate as upon the gallant speeches of her dinner partner; that her sympathetic color came and went more with her own spirits than yours. But you and I are not in love with her, dear madam, and Mr. Oakhurst is. And even in the folds of her Parisian gown, I am afraid this poor fellow saw the same subtle strokes of purity that he had seen in her homespun robe. And then there was the delightful revelation that she could walk, and that she had dear little feet of her own in the tiniest slippers of her French shoemaker, with such preposterous blue bows, and Chappell's own stamp, Rue de something or other, Paris, on the narrow sole.

He ran towards her with a heightened color and outstretched hands. But she whipped her own behind her, glanced rapidly up and down the long hall, and stood looking at him with a half-audacious, half-mischievous admiration in utter contrast to her old reserve.

"I've a great mind not to shake hands with you at all. You passed me just now on the piazza without speaking, and I ran after you, as I suppose many another poor woman has done."

Mr. Oakhurst stammered that she was so changed.

"The more reason why you should know me. Who changed me? You. You have re-created me. You found a helpless, crippled, sick, poverty-stricken woman, with one dress to her back, and that her own make, and you gave her life, health, strength, and fortune. You did, and you know it, sir. How do you like your work?" She caught the side seams of her gown in either hand and dropped him a playful courtesy. Then, with a sudden, relenting gesture, she gave him both her hands.

Outrageous as this speech was, and unfeminine, as I trust every fair reader will deem it, I fear it pleased Mr. Oakhurst. Not but that he was accustomed to a certain frank female admiration; but then it was of the *coulisses* and not of the cloister, with which he always persisted in associating Mrs. Decker. To be addressed in this way by an invalid Puritan, a sick saint, with the austerity of suffering still clothing her, — a woman who had a Bible on the dressing-table, who went to church three times a day, and was devoted to her husband, completely bowled him over. He still held her hands as she went on, —

"Why did n't you come before? What were you doing in Marysville, in San José, in Oakland? You see I have followed you. I saw you as you came down the cañon, and knew you at once. I saw your letter to Joseph, and knew you were coming. Why did n't you write to me? You will some time! Good-evening, Mr. Hamilton."

She had withdrawn her hands, but not until Hamilton, ascending the staircase, was nearly abreast of them. He raised his hat to her with well-bred composure, nodded familiarly to Oakhurst, and passed on. When he had gone Mrs. Decker lifted her eyes to Mr. Oakhurst. "Some day I shall ask a great favor of you!"

Mr. Oakhurst begged that it should be now. "No, not until you know me better. Then, some day, I shall want you to — kill that man!"

She laughed, such a pleasant little ringing laugh, such a display of dimples, — albeit a little fixed in the corners of her mouth, — such an innocent light in her brown eyes, and such a lovely color in her cheeks, that Mr. Oakhurst — who seldom laughed — was fain to laugh too. It was as if a lamb had proposed to a fox a foray into a neighboring sheepfold.

A few evenings after this, Mrs. Decker arose from a charmed circle of her admirers on the hotel piazza, excused herself for a few moments, laughingly declined an escort, and ran over to her little cottage — one of her husband's creation — across the road. Perhaps from the sudden and unwonted exercise in her still convalescent state, she breathed hurriedly and feverishly as she entered her boudoir, and once or twice placed her hand upon her breast. She was startled on turning up the light to find her husband lying on the sofa.

"You look hot and excited, Elsie, love," said Mr. Decker; "you ain't took worse, are you?"

Mrs. Decker's face had paled, but now flushed again. "No," she said, "only a little pain here," as she again placed her hand upon her corsage.

"Can I do anything for you?" said Mr. Decker, rising with affectionate concern.

"Run over to the hotel and get me some brandy, quick!"

Mr. Decker ran. Mrs. Decker closed and bolted the door, and then putting her hand to her bosom, drew out the pain. It was folded foursquare, and was, I grieve to say, in Mr. Oakhurst's handwriting.

She devoured it with burning eyes and cheeks until there came a step upon the porch. Then she hurriedly replaced it in her bosom and unbolted the door. Her husband entered; she raised the spirits to her lips and declared herself better.

"Are you going over there again to-night?" asked Mr. Decker submissively.

"No," said Mrs. Decker, with her eyes fixed dreamily on the floor.

"I would n't if I was you," said Mr. Decker with a sigh of relief. After a pause he took a seat on the sofa, and drawing his wife to his side, said, "Do you know what I was thinking of when you came in, Elsie?" Mrs. Decker ran her fingers through his stiff black hair, and could n't imagine.

"I was thinking of old times, Elsie; I was thinking of the days when I built that kerridge for you, Elsie — when I used to take you out to ride, and was both hoss and driver! We was poor then, and you was sick, Elsie, but we was happy. We 've got money now, and a house, and you 're quite another woman. I may say, dear, that you 're a *new* woman. And that 's where the trouble comes in. I could build you a kerridge, Elsie; I could build you a house, Elsie — but there I stopped. I could n't build up *you*. You 're strong and pretty, Elsie, and fresh and new. But somehow, Elsie, you ain't no work of mine!"

He paused. With one hand laid gently on his forehead and the other pressed upon her bosom as if to feel certain of the presence of her pain, she said sweetly and soothingly: —

"But it was your work, dear."

Mr. Decker shook his head sorrowfully. "No, Elsie, not mine. I had the chance to do it once and I let it go. It 's done now; but not by me."

Mrs. Decker raised her surprised, innocent eyes to his. He kissed her tenderly, and then went on in a more cheerful voice.

"That ain't all I was thinking of, Elsie. I was thinking that maybe you give too much of your company to that Mr. Hamilton. Not that there 's any wrong in it, to you or him. But it might make people talk. You 're the only one here, Elsie," said the master carpenter, looking fondly at his wife, "who is n't talked about; whose work ain't inspected or condemned."

Mrs. Decker was glad he had spoken about it. She had thought so, too, but she could not well be uncivil to Mr. Hamilton, who was a fine gentleman, without making a powerful enemy. "And he 's always treated me as if I was a born lady in his own circle," added the little woman, with a certain pride that made her husband fondly smile. "But I have thought of a plan. He will not stay here if I should go away. If, for instance, I went to San Francisco to visit ma for a few days, he would be gone before I should return."

Mr. Decker was delighted. "By all means," he said; "go to-morrow. Jack Oakhurst is going down, and I 'll put you in his charge."

Mrs. Decker did not think it was prudent. "Mr. Oakhurst is our friend, Joseph, but you know his reputation." In fact, she did not know that she ought to go now, knowing that he was going the same day; but with a kiss Mr. Decker overcame her scruples. She yielded gracefully. Few women, in fact, knew how to give up a point as charmingly as she.

She stayed a week in San Francisco. When she returned she was a trifle thinner and paler than she had been. This she explained as the result of perhaps too active exercise and

excitement. "I was out of doors nearly all the time, as ma will tell you," she said to her husband, "and always alone. I am getting quite independent now," she added gayly. "I don't want any escort — I believe, Joey dear, I could get along even without you — I'm so brave!"

But her visit, apparently, had not been productive of her impelling design. Mr. Hamilton had not gone, but had remained, and called upon them that very evening. "I've thought of a plan, Joey, dear," said Mrs. Decker when he had departed. "Poor Mr. Oakhurst has a miserable room at the hotel — suppose you ask him when he returns from San Francisco to stop with us. He can have our spare room. I don't think," she added archly, "that Mr. Hamilton will call often." Her husband laughed, intimated that she was a little coquette, pinched her cheek, and complied. "The queer thing about a woman," he said afterwards confidentially to Mr. Oakhurst, "is, that without having any plan of her own, she 'll take anybody's and build a house on it entirely different to suit herself. And dern my skin, if you 'll be able to say whether or not you did n't give the scale and measurements yourself. That 's what gets me."

The next week Mr. Oakhurst was installed in the Deckers' cottage. The business relations of her husband and himself were known to all, and her own reputation was above suspicion. Indeed, few women were more popular. She was domestic, she was prudent, she was pious. In a country of great feminine freedom and latitude, she never rode or walked with anybody but her husband; in an epoch of slang and ambiguous expression, she was always precise and formal in her speech; in the midst of a fashion of ostentatious decoration she never wore a diamond, nor a single valuable jewel. She never permitted an indecorum in public; she never countenanced the familiarities of California society. She declaimed against the prevailing tone of infidelity and skepticism in religion. Few people who were present will

ever forget the dignified yet stately manner with which she rebuked Mr. Hamilton in the public parlor for entering upon the discussion of a work on materialism, lately published; and some among them, also, will not forget the expression of amused surprise on Mr. Hamilton's face, that gradually changed to sardonic gravity as he courteously waived his point. Certainly, not Mr. Oakhurst, who from that moment began to be uneasily impatient of his friend, and even — if such a term could be applied to any moral quality in Mr. Oakhurst — to fear him.

For, during this time, Mr. Oakhurst had begun to show symptoms of a change in his usual habits. He was seldom, if ever, seen in his old haunts, in a bar-room, or with his old associates. Pink and white notes, in distracted handwriting, accumulated on the dressing-table in his rooms at Sacramento. It was given out in San Francisco that he had some organic disease of the heart, for which his physician had prescribed perfect rest. He read more, he took long walks, he sold his fast horses, he went to church.

I have a very vivid recollection of his first appearance there. He did not accompany the Deckers, nor did he go into their pew, but came in as the service commenced, and took a seat quietly in one of the back pews. By some mysterious instinct his presence became presently known to the congregation, some of whom so far forgot themselves, in their curiosity, as to face around and apparently address their responses to him. Before the service was over it was pretty well understood that "miserable sinners" meant Mr. Oakhurst. Nor did this mysterious influence fail to affect the officiating clergyman, who introduced an allusion to Mr. Oakhurst's calling and habits in a sermon on the architecture of Solomon's Temple, and in a manner so pointed and yet labored as to cause the youngest of us to flame with indignation. Happily, however, it was lost upon Jack; I do not think he even heard it. His handsome, colorless face —

albeit a trifle worn and thoughtful — was inscrutable. Only once, during the singing of a hymn, at a certain note in the contralto's voice, there crept into his dark eyes a look of wistful tenderness, so yearning and yet so hopeless that those who were watching him felt their own glisten. Yet I retain a very vivid remembrance of his standing up to receive the benediction, with the suggestion, in his manner and tightly buttoned coat, of taking the fire of his adversary at ten paces. After church he disappeared as quietly as he had entered, and fortunately escaped hearing the comments on his rash act. His appearance was generally considered as an impertinence — attributable only to some wanton fancy — or possibly a bet. One or two thought that the sexton was exceedingly remiss in not turning him out after discovering who he was; and a prominent pewholder remarked that if he could n't take his wife and daughters to that church without exposing them to such an influence, he would try to find some church where he could. Another traced Mr. Oakhurst's presence to certain Broad Church radical tendencies, which he regretted to say he had lately noted in their pastor. Deacon Sawyer, whose delicately organized, sickly wife had already borne him eleven children, and died in an ambitious attempt to complete the dozen, avowed that the presence of a person of Mr. Oakhurst's various and indiscriminate gallantries was an insult to the memory of the deceased that, as a man, he could not brook.

It was about this time that Mr. Oakhurst, contrasting himself with a conventional world in which he had hitherto rarely mingled, became aware that there was something in his face, figure, and carriage quite unlike other men, — something that if it did not betray his former career, at least showed an individuality and originality that was suspicious. In this belief he shaved off his long, silken mustache, and religiously brushed out his clustering curls every morning. He even went so far as to affect a negli-

gence of dress, and hid his small, slim, arched feet in the largest and heaviest walking-shoes. There is a story told that he went to his tailor in Sacramento, and asked him to make him a suit of clothes like everybody else. The tailor, familiar with Mr. Oakhurst's fastidiousness, did not know what he meant. "I mean," said Mr. Oakhurst savagely, "something *respectable*, — something that does n't exactly fit me, you know." But however Mr. Oakhurst might hide his shapely limbs in homespun and home-made garments, there was something in his carriage, something in the pose of his beautiful head, something in the strong and fine manliness of his presence, something in the perfect and utter discipline and control of his muscles, something in the high repose of his nature — a repose not so much a matter of intellectual ruling as of his very nature — that go where he would, and with whom, he was always a notable man in ten thousand. Perhaps this was never so clearly intimated to Mr. Oakhurst as when, emboldened by Mr. Hamilton's advice and assistance and his predilections, he became a San Francisco broker. Even before objection was made to his presence in the Board — the objection, I remember, was urged very eloquently by Watt Sanders, who was supposed to be the inventor of the "freezing-out" system of disposing of poor stockholders, and who also enjoyed the reputation of having been the impelling cause of Briggs of Tuolumne's ruin and suicide — even before this formal protest of respectability against lawlessness, the aquiline suggestions of Mr. Oakhurst's mien and countenance not only prematurely fluttered the pigeons, but absolutely occasioned much uneasiness among the fish-hawks, who circled below him with their booty. "Dash me! but he 's as likely to go after us as anybody," said Joe Fielding.

It wanted but a few days before the close of the brief summer season at San Isabel Warm Springs. Already

there had been some migration of the more fashionable, and there was an uncomfortable suggestion of dregs and lees in the social life that remained. Mr. Oakhurst was moody; it was hinted that even the secure reputation of Mrs. Decker could no longer protect her from the gossip which his presence excited. It is but fair to her to say that during the last few weeks of this trying ordeal she looked like a sweet, pale martyr, and conducted herself toward her traducers with the gentle, forgiving manner of one who relied not upon the idle homage of the crowd, but upon the security of a principle that was dearer than popular favor. "They talk about myself and Mr. Oakhurst, my dear," she said to a friend, "but Heaven and my husband can best answer their calumny. It never shall be said that my husband ever turned his back upon a friend in the moment of his adversity because the position was changed, because his friend was poor and he was rich." This was the first intimation to the public that Jack had lost money, although it was known generally that the Deckers had lately bought some valuable property in San Francisco.

A few evenings after this an incident occurred which seemed to unpleasantly discord with the general social harmony that had always existed at San Isabel. It was at dinner, and Mr. Oakhurst and Mr. Hamilton, who sat together at a separate table, were observed to rise in some agitation. When they reached the hall, by a common instinct they stepped into a little breakfast-room which was vacant, and closed the door. Then Mr. Hamilton turned, with a half-amused, half-serious smile, toward his friend, and said, —

"If we are to quarrel, Jack Oakhurst, — you and I, — in the name of all that is ridiculous, don't let it be about a" —

I do not know what was the epithet intended. It was

either unspoken or lost. For at that very instant Mr. Oakhurst raised a wine-glass and dashed its contents into Hamilton's face.

As they faced each other the men seemed to have changed natures. Mr. Oakhurst was trembling with excitement, and the wine-glass that he returned to the table shivered between his fingers. Mr. Hamilton stood there, grayish white, erect, and dripping. After a pause he said coldly, —

"So be it. But remember! our quarrel commences here. If I fall by your hand, you shall not use it to clear her character; if you fall by mine, you shall not be called a martyr. I am sorry it has come to this, but amen! — the sooner now the better."

He turned proudly, dropped his lids over his cold steel-blue eyes, as if sheathing a rapier, bowed, and passed coldly out.

They met twelve hours later in a little hollow two miles from the hotel, on the Stockton road. As Mr. Oakhurst received his pistol from Colonel Starbottle's hands he said to him in a low voice, "Whatever turns up or down I shall not return to the hotel. You will find some directions in my room. Go there" — but his voice suddenly faltered, and he turned his glistening eyes away, to his second's intense astonishment. "I 've been out a dozen times with Jack Oakhurst," said Colonel Starbottle afterwards, "and I never saw him anyways cut before. Blank me if I did n't think he was losing his sand, till he walked to position."

The two reports were almost simultaneous. Mr. Oakhurst's right arm dropped suddenly to his side, and his pistol would have fallen from his paralyzed fingers, but the discipline of trained nerve and muscle prevailed, and he kept his grasp until he had shifted it to the other hand, without changing his position. Then there was a silence that seemed interminable, a gathering of two or three dark fig-

ures where a smoke curl still lazily floated, and then the hurried, husky, panting voice of Colonel Starbottle in his ear, "He 's hit hard — through the lungs — you must run for it!"

Jack turned his dark, questioning eyes upon his second, but did not seem to listen; rather seemed to hear some other voice, remoter in the distance. He hesitated, and then made a step forward in the direction of the distant group. Then he paused again as the figures separated, and the surgeon came hastily toward him.

"He would like to speak with you a moment," said the man. "You have little time to lose, I know; but," he added in a lower voice, "it is my duty to tell you he has still less."

A look of despair so hopeless in its intensity swept over Mr. Oakhurst's usually impassive face that the surgeon started. "You are hit," he said, glancing at Jack's helpless arm.

"Nothing — a mere scratch," said Jack hastily. Then he added, with a bitter laugh, "I'm not in luck to-day. But come! We'll see what he wants."

His long feverish stride outstripped the surgeon's, and in another moment he stood where the dying man lay — like most dying men — the one calm, composed, central figure of an anxious group. Mr. Oakhurst's face was less calm as he dropped on one knee beside him and took his hand. "I want to speak with this gentleman alone," said Hamilton, with something of his old imperious manner, as he turned to those about him. When they drew back, he looked up in Oakhurst's face.

"I've something to tell you, Jack."

His own face was white, but not so white as that which Mr. Oakhurst bent over him — a face so ghastly, with haunting doubts and a hopeless presentiment of coming evil, a face so piteous in its infinite weariness and envy of death,

that the dying man was touched, even in the languor of dissolution, with a pang of compassion, and the cynical smile faded from his lips.

"Forgive me, Jack," he whispered more feebly, "for what I have to say. I don't say it in anger, but only because it must be said. I could not do my duty to you — I could not die contented until you knew it all. It's a miserable business at best, all around. But it can't be helped now. Only I ought to have fallen by Decker's pistol and not yours."

A flush like fire came into Jack's cheek, and he would have risen, but Hamilton held him fast.

"Listen! in my pocket you will find two letters. Take them — there! You will know the handwriting. But promise you will not read them until you are in a place of safety. Promise me!"

Jack did not speak, but held the letters between his fingers as if they had been burning coals.

"Promise me," said Hamilton faintly.

"Why?" asked Oakhurst, dropping his friend's hand coldly.

"Because," said the dying man with a bitter smile, — "because — when you have read them — you — will — go back — to capture — and death!"

They were his last words. He pressed Jack's hand faintly. Then his grasp relaxed, and he fell back a corpse.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night, and Mrs. Decker reclined languidly upon the sofa with a novel in her hand, while her husband discussed the politics of the country in the bar-room of the hotel. It was a warm night, and the French window looking out upon a little balcony was partly open. Suddenly she heard a foot upon the balcony, and she raised her eyes from the book with a slight start. The next moment the window was hurriedly thrust wide and a man entered.

Mrs. Decker rose to her feet with a little cry of alarm.

"For Heaven's sake, Jack, are you mad? He has only gone for a little while — he may return at any moment. Come an hour later — to-morrow — any time when I can get rid of him — but go, now, dear, at once."

Mr. Oakhurst walked toward the door, bolted it, and then faced her without a word. His face was haggard, his coat-sleeve hung loosely over an arm that was bandaged and bloody.

Nevertheless, her voice did not falter as she turned again toward him. "What has happened, Jack? Why are you here?"

He opened his coat, and threw two letters in her lap.

"To return your lover's letters — to kill you — and then myself," he said in a voice so low as to be almost inaudible.

Among the many virtues of this admirable woman was invincible courage. She did not faint, she did not cry out. She sat quietly down again, folded her hands in her lap, and said calmly, —

"And why should you not?"

Had she recoiled, had she shown any fear or contrition, had she essayed an explanation or apology, Mr. Oakhurst would have looked upon it as an evidence of guilt. But there is no quality that courage recognizes so quickly as courage, there is no condition that desperation bows before but desperation; and Mr. Oakhurst's power of analysis was not so keen as to prevent him from confounding her courage with a moral quality. Even in his fury he could not help admiring this dauntless invalid.

"Why should you not?" she repeated with a smile. "You gave me life, health, and happiness, Jack. You gave me your love. Why should you not take what you have given? Go on. I am ready."

She held out her hands with that same infinite grace of

yielding with which she had taken his own on the first day of their meeting at the hotel. Jack raised his head, looked at her for one wild moment, dropped upon his knees beside her, and raised the folds of her dress to his feverish lips. But she was too clever not to instantly see her victory; she was too much of a woman, with all her cleverness, to refrain from pressing that victory home. At the same moment, as with the impulse of an outraged and wounded woman, she rose, and with an imperious gesture pointed to the window. Mr. Oakhurst rose in his turn, cast one glance upon her, and without another word passed out of her presence forever.

When he had gone, she closed the window and bolted it, and going to the chimneypiece placed the letters, one by one, in the flame of the candle until they were consumed. I would not have the reader think that during this painful operation she was unmoved. Her hand trembled and — not being a brute — for some minutes (perhaps longer) she felt very badly, and the corners of her sensitive mouth were depressed. When her husband arrived it was with a genuine joy that she ran to him, and nestled against his broad breast with a feeling of security that thrilled the honest fellow to the core.

"But I've heard dreadful news to-night, Elsie," said Mr. Decker, after a few endearments were exchanged.

"Don't tell me anything dreadful, dear; I'm not well to-night," she pleaded sweetly.

"But it's about Mr. Oakhurst and Hamilton."

"Please!" Mr. Decker could not resist the petitionary grace of those white hands and that sensitive mouth, and took her to his arms. Suddenly he said, "What's that?"

He was pointing to the bosom of her white dress. Where Mr. Oakhurst had touched her there was a spot of blood.

It was nothing; she had slightly cut her hand in closing the window; it shut so hard! If Mr. Decker had remem-

bered to close and bolt the shutter before he went out, he might have saved her this. There was such a genuine irritability and force in this remark that Mr. Decker was quite overcome by remorse. But Mrs. Decker forgave him with that graciousness which I have before pointed out in these pages, and with the halo of that forgiveness and marital confidence still lingering above the pair, with the reader's permission we will leave them and return to Mr. Oakhurst.

But not for two weeks. At the end of that time he walked into his rooms in Sacramento, and in his old manner took his seat at the faro-table.

"How 's your arm, Jack?" asked an incautious player.

There was a smile followed the question, which, however, ceased as Jack looked up quietly at the speaker.

"It bothers my dealing a little, but I can shoot as well with my left."

The game was continued in that decorous silence which usually distinguished the table at which Mr. John Oakhurst presided.

THE ROSE OF TUOLUMNE

CHAPTER I

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The lights were out in Robinson's Hall, where there had been dancing and revelry, and the moon, riding high, painted the black windows with silver. The cavalcade that an hour ago had shocked the sedate pines with song and laughter were all dispersed; one enamored swain had ridden east, another west, another north, another south, and the object of their adoration, left within her bower at Chemisal Ridge, was calmly going to bed.

I regret that I am not able to indicate the exact stage of that process. Two chairs were already filled with delicate enwrappings and white confusion, and the young lady herself, half hidden in the silky threads of her yellow hair, had at one time borne a faint resemblance to a partly husked ear of Indian corn. But she was now clothed in that one long, formless garment that makes all women equal, and the round shoulders and neat waist that an hour ago had been so fatal to the peace of mind of Four Forks had utterly disappeared. The face above it was very pretty; the foot below, albeit shapely, was not small. "The flowers, as a general thing, don't raise their heads *much* to look after me," she had said with superb frankness to one of her lovers.

The expression of "The Rose" to-night was contentedly placid. She walked slowly to the window, and, making the smallest possible peep-hole through the curtain, looked out. The motionless figure of a horseman still lingered on the

road, with an excess of devotion that only a coquette or a woman very much in love could tolerate. "The Rose" at that moment was neither, and after a reasonable pause turned away, saying, quite audibly, that it was "too ridiculous for anything." As she came back to her dressing-table it was noticeable that she walked steadily and erect, without that slight affectation of lameness common to people with whom bare feet are only an episode. Indeed, it was only four years ago that, without shoes or stockings, a long-limbed, colty girl, in a waistless calico gown, she had leaped from the tail-board of her father's emigrant wagon when it first drew up at Chemisal Ridge. Certain wild habits of The Rose had outlived transplanting and cultivation.

A knock at the door surprised her. In another moment she had leaped into bed, and, with darkly frowning eyes, from its secure recesses demanded, "Who 's there?"

An apologetic murmur on the other side of the door was the response.

"Why, father, is that you?"

There were further murmurs, affirmative, deprecatory, and persistent.

"Wait," said The Rose. She got up, unlocked the door, leaped nimbly into bed again, and said, "Come."

The door opened timidly. The broad, stooping shoulders and grizzled head of a man past the middle age appeared; after a moment's hesitation a pair of large, diffident feet, shod with canvas slippers, concluded to follow. When the apparition was complete it closed the door softly, and stood there — a very shy ghost indeed, with apparently more than the usual spiritual indisposition to begin a conversation. The Rose resented this impatiently, though I fear not altogether intelligibly: —

"Do, father, I declare!"

"You was abed, Jinny," said Mr. M'Closky slowly, glancing with a singular mixture of masculine awe and

paternal pride upon the two chairs and their contents. "You was abed and ondressed."

"I was."

"Surely," said Mr. M'Closky, seating himself on the extreme edge of the bed, and painfully tucking his feet away under it, — "surely." After a pause he rubbed a short, thick, stumpy beard, that bore a general resemblance to a badly worn blacking-brush, with the palm of his hand, and went on, "You had a good time, Jinny?"

"Yes, father."

"They was all there?"

"Yes; Rance and York and Ryder and Jack."

"And Jack!" Mr. M'Closky endeavored to throw an expression of arch inquiry into his small, tremulous eyes, but meeting the unabashed, widely opened lid of his daughter, he winked rapidly and blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Yes, Jack was there," said Jinny, without change of color, or the least self-consciousness in her great gray eyes, "and he came home with me." She paused a moment, locking her two hands under her head, and assuming a more comfortable position on the pillow. "He asked me that same question again, father, and I said, 'Yes.' It 's to be — soon. We 're going to live at Four Forks, in his own house, and next winter we 're going to Sacramento. I suppose it 's all right, father, eh?" She emphasized the question with a slight kick through the bedclothes as the parental M'Closky had fallen into an abstract reverie.

"Yes, surely," said Mr. M'Closky, recovering himself with some confusion. After a pause he looked down at the bedclothes, and, patting them tenderly, continued. "You could n't have done better, Jinny. They is n't a girl in Tuolumne ez could strike it ez rich ez you hev — even if they got the chance." He paused again and then said, "Jinny?"

"Yes, father."

"You 'se in bed and ondressed?"

"Yes."

"You could n't," said Mr. M'Closky, glancing hopelessly at the two chairs and slowly rubbing his chin, — "you could n't dress yourself again, could yer?"

"Why, father?"

"Kinder get yourself into them things again?" he added hastily. "Not all of 'em, you know, but some of 'em. Not if I helped you? — sorter stood by and lent a hand now and then with a strap or a buckle, or a necktie or a shoe-string," he continued, still looking at the chairs, and evidently trying to boldly familiarize himself with their contents.

"Are you crazy, father?" demanded Jinny, suddenly sitting up with a portentous switch of her yellow mane. Mr. M'Closky rubbed one side of his beard, which already had the appearance of having been quite worn away by that process, and faintly dodged the question.

"Jinny," he said, tenderly stroking the bedclothes as he spoke, "this yer 's what 's the matter. Thar is a stranger downstairs — a stranger to you, lovey, but a man ez I 've knowed a long time. He 's been here about an hour, and he 'll be here ontil fower o'clock, when the up stage passes. Now I wants ye, Jinny, dear, to get up and come downstairs and kinder help me pass the time with him. It 's no use, Jinny," he went on, gently raising his hand to deprecate any interruption, — "it 's no use, he won't go to bed! He won't play keerds; whiskey don't take no effect on him. Ever since I knowed him he was the most onsatisfactory critter to hev round" —

"What do you have him round for, then?" interrupted Miss Jinny sharply.

Mr. M'Closky's eyes fell. "Ef he hed n't kem out of his way to-night to do me a good turn, I would n't ask ye, Jinny. I would n't, so help me! But I thought ez I could n't do anything with him, you might come down and sorter fetch him, Jinny, as you did the others."

Miss Jinny shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"Is he old or young?"

"He's young enough, Jinny, but he knows a power of things."

"What does he do?"

"Not much, I reckon. He's got money in the mill at Four Forks. He travels round a good deal. I've heard, Jinny, that he's a poet — writes them rhymes, you know." Mr. M'Closky here appealed submissively, but directly to his daughter. He remembered that she had frequently been in receipt of printed elegiac couplets known as "mottoes," containing inclosures equally saccharine.

Miss Jinny slightly curled her pretty lip. She had that fine contempt for the illusions of fancy which belongs to the perfectly healthy young animal.

"Not," continued Mr. M'Closky, rubbing his head reflectively, — "not ez I'd advise ye, Jinny, to say anything to him about poetry. It ain't twenty minutes ago ez *I* did. I set the whiskey afore him in the parlor. I wound up the music-box and set it goin'. Then I sez to him, sociable-like and free, 'Jest consider yourself in your own house, and repeat what you allow to be your finest production,' — and he raged. That man, Jinny, jest raged. Thar's no end of the names he called me. You see, Jinny," continued Mr. M'Closky apologetically, "he's known me a long time."

But his daughter had already dismissed the question with her usual directness. "I'll be down in a few moments, father," she said after a pause, "but don't say anything to him about it — don't say I was abed."

Mr. M'Closky's face beamed. "You was allers a good girl, Jinny," he said, dropping on one knee the better to imprint a respectful kiss on her forehead. But Jinny caught him by the wrists and for a moment held him captive. "Father," said she, trying to fix his shy eyes with

the clear, steady glance of her own, "all the girls that were there to-night had some one with them. Mame Robinson had her aunt, Lucy Rance had her mother, Kate Pierson had her sister — all except me had some other woman. Father, dear," — her lip trembled just a little, — "I wish mother had n't died when I was so small. I wish there was some other woman in the family besides me. I ain't lonely with you, father, dear; but if there was only some one, you know, when the time comes for John and me" —

Her voice here suddenly gave out, but not her brave eyes, that were still fixed earnestly upon his face. Mr. M'Closky, apparently tracing out a pattern on the bed-quilt, essayed words of comfort.

"There ain't one of them gals ez you 've named, Jinny, ez could do what you 've done with a whole Noah's ark of relations at their backs! Thar ain't one ez would n't sacrifice her nearest relation to make the strike that you hev. Ez to mothers, maybe, my dear, you 're doin' better without one." He rose suddenly, and walked toward the door. When he reached it he turned, and in his old deprecating manner, said, "Don't be long, Jinny," smiled, and vanished from the head downward, his canvas slippers asserting themselves resolutely to the last.

When Mr. M'Closky reached his parlor again his troublesome guest was not there. The decanter stood on the table untouched, three or four books lay upon the floor, a number of photographic views of the Sierras were scattered over the sofa; two sofa pillows, a newspaper, and a Mexican blanket lay on the carpet, as if the late occupant of the room had tried to read in a recumbent position. A French window, opening upon a veranda, which never before in the history of the house had been unfastened, now betrayed by its waving lace curtain the way that the fugitive had escaped. Mr. M'Closky heaved a sigh of despair; he looked at the gorgeous carpet purchased in

Sacramento at a fabulous price, at the crimson satin and rosewood furniture unparalleled in the history of Tuolumne, at the massively framed pictures on the walls, and looked beyond it, through the open window, to the reckless man who, fleeing these sybaritic allurements, was smoking a cigar upon the moonlit road. This room, which had so often awed the youth of Tuolumne into filial respect, was evidently a failure. It remained to be seen if The Rose herself had lost her fragrance. "I reckon Jinny will fetch him yet," said Mr. M'Closky, with parental faith.

He stepped from the window upon the veranda. But he had scarcely done this before his figure was detected by the stranger, who at once crossed the road. When within a few feet of M'Closky he stopped. "You persistent old plantigrade," he said in a low voice, audible only to the person addressed, and a face full of affected anxiety, "why don't you go to bed? Did n't I tell you to go and leave me here alone? In the name of all that 's idiotic and imbecile, why do you continue to shuffle about here? Or are you trying to drive me crazy with your presence, as you have with that wretched music-box that I 've just dropped under yonder tree? It 's an hour and a half yet before the stage passes; do you think, do you imagine for a single moment, that I can tolerate you until then — eh? Why don't you speak? Are you asleep? You don't mean to say that you have the audacity to add somnambulism to your other weaknesses; you 're not low enough to repeat yourself under any such weak pretext as that — eh?"

A fit of nervous coughing ended this extraordinary exordium, and half sitting, half leaning against the veranda, Mr. M'Closky's guest turned his face, and part of a slight, elegant figure, towards his host. The lower portion of this upturned face wore an habitual expression of fastidious discontent, with an occasional line of physical suffering. But the brow above was frank and critical, and a pair of dark

mirthful eyes sat in playful judgment over the supersensitive mouth and its suggestion.

"I allowed to go to bed, Ridgeway," said Mr. M'Closky meekly, "but my girl Jinny 's jist got back from a little tear up at Robinson's, and ain't inclined to turn in yet. You know what girls is. So I thought we three would jist have a social chat together to pass away the time."

"You mendacious old hypocrite! she got back an hour ago," said Ridgeway, "as that savage-looking escort of hers, who has been haunting the house ever since, can testify. My belief is, that, like an enterprising idiot as you are, you 've dragged that girl out of her bed that we might mutually bore each other."

Mr. M'Closky was too much stunned by this evidence of Ridgeway's apparently superhuman penetration to reply. After enjoying his host's confusion for a moment with his eyes, Ridgeway's mouth asked grimly, —

"And who is this girl, anyway?"

"Nancy's."

"Your wife's?"

"Yes. But look yar, Ridgeway," said M'Closky, laying one hand imploringly on Ridgeway's sleeve, "not a word about her to Jinny. She thinks her mother 's dead — died in Missouri. Eh!"

Ridgeway nearly rolled from the veranda in an excess of rage. "Good God! Do you mean to say that you have been concealing from her a fact that any day, any moment, may come to her ears? That you 've been letting her grow up in ignorance of something that by this time she might have outgrown and forgotten? That you have been, like a besotted old ass, all these years slowly forging a thunderbolt that any one may crush her with? That"— but here Ridgeway's cough took possession of his voice, and even put a moisture into his dark eyes, as he looked at M'Closky's aimless hand feebly employed upon his beard.

"But," said M'Closky, "look, how she 's done. She 's held her head as high as any of 'em. She 's to be married in a month to the richest man in the county, and," he added cunningly, "Jack Ashe ain't the kind o' man to sit by and hear anything said of his wife or her relations, you bet. But hush — that 's her foot on the stairs. She 's cummin'."

She came. I don't think the French window ever held a finer view than when she put aside the curtains and stepped out. She had dressed herself simply and hurriedly, but with a woman's knowledge of her best points, so that you got the long curves of her shapely limbs, the shorter curves of her round waist and shoulders, the long sweep of her yellow braids, the light of her gray eyes, and even the delicate rose of her complexion, without knowing how it was delivered to you.

The introduction by Mr. M'Closky was brief. When Ridgeway had got over the fact that it was two o'clock in the morning, and that the cheek of this Tuolumne goddess nearest him was as dewy and fresh as an infant's, — that she looked like Marguerite, without probably ever having heard of Goethe's heroine, — he talked, I dare say, very sensibly. When Miss Jinny, who from her childhood had been brought up among the sons of Anak, and who was accustomed to have a supremacy of our noble sex presented to her as a physical fact, found herself in the presence of a new and strange power, in the slight and elegant figure beside her, she was at first frightened and cold. But finding that this power, against which the weapons of her own physical charms were of no avail, was a kindly one, albeit general, she fell to worshiping it, after the fashion of woman, and casting before it the fetiches and other idols of her youth. She even confessed to it. So that in half an hour Ridgeway was in possession of all the facts connected with her life, and a great many, I fear, of her fancies — except one.

When Mr. M'Closky found the young people thus amicably disposed, he calmly went to sleep.

It was a pleasant time to each. To Miss Jinny it had the charm of novelty, and she abandoned herself to it for that reason much more freely and innocently than her companion, who knew something more of the inevitable logic of the position. I do not think, however, he had any intention of love-making. I do not think he was at all conscious of being in the attitude. I am quite positive he would have shrunk from the suggestion of disloyalty to the one woman whom he admitted to himself he loved. But, like most poets, he was much more true to an idea than a fact, and, having a very lofty conception of womanhood, with a very sanguine nature, he saw in each new face the possibilities of a realization of his ideal. It was, perhaps, an unfortunate thing for the women, particularly as he brought to each trial a surprising freshness which was very deceptive, and quite distinct from the *blasé* familiarity of the man of gallantry. It was this perennial virginity of the affections that most endeared him to the best women, who were prone to exercise towards him a chivalrous protection, — as of one likely to go astray unless looked after, — and indulged in the dangerous combination of sentiment with the highest maternal instincts. It was this quality which caused Jinny to recognize in him a certain boyishness that required her womanly care, and even induced her to offer to accompany him to the cross-roads when the time of his departure arrived. With her superior knowledge of woodcraft and the locality, she would have kept him from being lost. I wot not but that she would have protected him from bears or wolves, but chiefly, I think, from the feline fascinations of Mame Robinson and Lucy Rance, who might be lying in wait for this tender young poet. Nor did she cease to be thankful that Providence had, so to speak, delivered him as a trust into her hands.

It was a lovely night. The moon swung low and languished softly on the snowy ridge beyond. There were quaint odors in the still air, and a strange incense from the woods perfumed their young blood and seemed to swoon in their pulses. Small wonder that they lingered on the white road, that their feet climbed unwillingly the little hill where they were to part, and that when they at last reached it, even the saving grace of speech seemed to have forsaken them.

For there they stood, alone. There was no sound nor motion in earth, or woods, or heaven. They might have been the one man and woman for whom this goodly earth that lay at their feet, rimmed with the deepest azure, was created. And seeing this, they turned towards each other with a sudden instinct, and their hands met, and then their lips in one long kiss.

And then out of the mysterious distance came the sound of voices and the sharp clatter of hoofs and wheels, and Jinny slid away — a white moonbeam — from the hill. For a moment she glimmered through the trees, and then, reaching the house, passed her sleeping father on the veranda, and, darting into her bedroom, locked the door, threw open the window, and, falling on her knees beside it, leaned her hot cheeks upon her hands and listened. In a few moments she was rewarded by the sharp clatter of hoofs on the stony road, but it was only a horseman, whose dark figure was swiftly lost in the shadows of the lower road. At another time she might have recognized the man, but her eyes and ears were now all intent on something else. It came presently, with dancing lights, a musical rattle of harness, a cadence of hoof-beats, that set her heart to beating in unison, and was gone. A sudden sense of loneliness came over her, and tears gathered in her sweet eyes.

She arose and looked around her. There was the little led the dressing-table, the roses that she had worn last

night, still fresh and blooming in the little vase. Everything was there, but everything looked strange; the roses should have been withered, for the party seemed so long ago; she could hardly remember when she had worn this dress that lay upon the chair. So she came back to the window and sank down beside it, with her cheek, a trifle paler, leaning on her hand, and her long braids reaching to the floor. The stars paled slowly, like her cheek, yet with eyes that saw not she still looked from her window for the coming dawn.

It came, with violet deepening into purple, with purple flushing into rose, with rose shining into silver and glowing into gold. The straggling line of black picket fence below, that had faded away with the stars, came back with the sun. What was that object moving by the fence? Jinny raised her head and looked intently. It was a man endeavoring to climb the pickets, and falling backward with each attempt. Suddenly she started to her feet, as if the rosy flushes of the dawn had crimsoned her from forehead to shoulders; then she stood, white as the wall, with her hands clasped upon her bosom. Then, with a single bound she reached the door, and, with flying braids and fluttering skirt, sprang down the stairs and out in the garden walk. When within a few feet of the fence she uttered a cry — the first she had given — the cry of a mother over her stricken babe, of a tigress over her mangled cub, and in another moment she had leaped the fence and knelt beside Ridgeway, with his fainting head upon her breast.

"My boy — my poor, poor boy! who has done this?"

Who, indeed? His clothes were covered with dust, his waistcoat was torn open; and his handkerchief, wet with the blood it could not stanch, fell from a cruel stab beneath his shoulder.

"Ridgeway! — my poor boy — tell me what has happened."

Ridgeway slowly opened his heavy, blue-veined lids and gazed upon her. Presently a gleam of mischief came into his dark eyes, a smile stole over his lips as he whispered slowly, —

"It — was — your kiss — did it — Jinny, dear! I had forgotten — how high-priced — the article was here. Never mind, Jinny!" — he feebly raised her hand to his white lips — "it was — worth it," and fainted away.

Jinny started to her feet and looked wildly around her. Then, with a sudden resolution, she stooped over the insensible man, and, with one strong effort, lifted him in her arms as if he had been a child. When her father, a moment later, rubbed his eyes and awoke from his sleep upon the veranda, it was to see a goddess, erect and triumphant, striding toward the house, with the helpless body of a man lying across that breast where man had never lain before, — a goddess at whose imperious mandate he arose and cast open the doors before her. And then when she had laid her unconscious burden on the sofa, the goddess fled, and a woman, helpless and trembling, stood before him, — a woman that cried out that she had "killed him," that she was "wicked! wicked!" and that, even saying so, staggered and fell beside her late burden. And all that Mr. M'Closky could do was to feebly rub his beard, and say to himself, vaguely and incoherently, that "Jinny had fetched him."

CHAPTER II

Before noon the next day it was generally believed throughout Four Forks that Ridgeway Dent had been attacked and wounded at Chemisal Ridge by a highwayman, who fled on the approach of the Wingdam coach. It is to be presumed that this statement met with Ridgeway's approval, as he did not contradict it, nor supplement it with

any details. His wound was severe, but not dangerous. After the first excitement had subsided, there was, I think, a prevailing impression, common to the provincial mind, that his misfortune was the result of the defective moral quality of his being a stranger, and was in a vague sort of a way a warning to others and a lesson to him. "Did you hear how that San Francisco feller was took down the other night?" was the average tone of introductory remark. Indeed, there was a general suggestion that Ridgeway's presence was one that no self-respecting, high-minded highwayman, honorably conservative of the best interests of Tuolumne County, could for a moment tolerate.

Except for the few words spoken on that eventful morning, Ridgeway was reticent of the past. When Jinny strove to gather some details of the affray that might offer a clue to his unknown assailant, a subtle twinkle in his brown eyes was the only response. When Mr. M'Closky attempted the same process, the young gentleman threw abusive epithets, and eventually slippers, teaspoons, and other lighter articles within the reach of an invalid, at the head of his questioner. "I think he 's coming round, Jinny," said Mr. M'Closky; "he laid for me this morning with a candlestick."

It was about this time that Miss Jinny, having sworn her father to secrecy regarding the manner in which Ridgeway had been carried into the house, conceived the idea of addressing the young man as "Mr. Dent," and of apologizing for intruding whenever she entered the room in the discharge of her household duties. It was about this time that she became more rigidly conscientious to those duties, and less general in her attentions; it was at this time that the quality of the invalid's diet improved, and that she consulted him less frequently about it. It was about this time that she began to see more company, that the house was greatly frequented by her former admirers, with whom she rode, walked, and danced. It was at about this time, also,

and when Ridgeway was able to be brought out on the veranda in a chair, that, with great archness of manner, she introduced to him Miss Lucy Ashe, the sister of her betrothed — a flashing brunette and terrible heart-breaker of Four Forks. And in the midst of this gayety she concluded that she would spend a week with the Robinsons, to whom she owed a visit. She enjoyed herself greatly there, so much, indeed, that she became quite hollow-eyed, the result, as she explained to her father, of a too frequent indulgence in festivity. "You see, father, I won't have many chances after John and I are married, — you know how queer he is, — and I must make the most of my time," and she laughed an odd little laugh, which had lately become habitual to her. "And how is Mr. Dent getting on?" Her father replied that he was getting on very well indeed, so well, in fact, that he was able to leave for San Francisco two days ago. "He wanted to be remembered to you, Jinny — 'remembered kindly,' — yes, they is the very words he used," said Mr. M'Closky, looking down and consulting one of his large shoes for corroboration. Miss Jinny was glad to hear that he was so much better. Miss Jinny could not imagine anything that pleased her more than to know that he was so strong as to be able to rejoin his friends again, who must love him so much and be so anxious about him. Her father thought she would be pleased, and now that he was gone there was really no necessity for her to hurry back. Miss Jinny, in a high, metallic voice, did not know that she had expressed any desire to stay; still if her presence had become distasteful at home — if her own father was desirous of getting rid of her — if, when she was so soon to leave his roof forever, he still begrudged her those few days remaining — if — "My God, Jinny, so help me!" said Mr. M'Closky, clutching despairingly at his beard; "I did n't go for to say anything of the kind. I thought that you" —

"Never mind, father," interrupted Jinny magnanimously,

"you misunderstood me; of course you did, you could n't help it — you 're a MAN!" Mr. M'Closky, sorely crushed, would have vaguely protested, but his daughter, having relieved herself, after the manner of her sex, with a mental personal application of an abstract statement, forgave him with a kiss.

Nevertheless, for two or three days after her return, Mr. M'Closky followed his daughter about the house with yearning eyes, and occasionally with timid, diffident feet. Sometimes he came upon her suddenly at her household tasks with an excuse so palpably false, and a careless manner so outrageously studied, that she was fain to be embarrassed for him. Later he took to rambling about the house at night, and was often seen noiselessly passing and repassing through the hall after she had retired. On one occasion he was surprised first by sleep and then by the early rising Jinny as he lay on the rug outside her chamber door. "You treat me like a child, father," said Jinny. "I thought, Jinny," said the father apologetically, — "I thought I heard sounds as if you was takin' on inside, and listenin' I fell asleep." "You dear, old, simple-minded baby," said Jinny, looking past her father's eyes, and lifting his grizzled locks one by one with meditative fingers; "what should I be takin' on for? Look how much taller I am than you," she said, suddenly lifting herself up to the extreme of her superb figure. Then rubbing his head rapidly with both hands, as if she were anointing his hair with some rare unguent, she patted him on the back and returned to her room. The result of this and one or two other equally sympathetic interviews was to produce a change in Mr. M'Closky's manner, which was, if possible, still more discomposing. He grew unjustifiably hilarious, cracked jokes with the servants, and repeated to Jinny humorous stories, with the attitude of facetiousness carefully preserved throughout the entire narration, and the point

utterly ignored and forgotten. Certain incidents reminded him of funny things, which invariably turned out to have not the slightest relevancy or application. He occasionally brought home with him practical humorists, with a sanguine hope of setting them going, like the music-box, for his daughter's edification. He essayed the singing of melodies with great freedom of style and singular limitation of note. He sang "Come, Haste to the Wedding, ye Lasses and Maidens," of which he knew a single line, and that incorrectly, as being peculiarly apt and appropriate. Yet away from the house and his daughter's presence he was silent and distraught. His absence of mind was particularly noted by his workmen at the Empire Quartz Mill. "Ef the old man don't look out and wake up," said his foreman, "he 'll hev them feet of his yet under the stamps. When he ain't givin' his mind to 'em, they is altogether too promiskuss."

A few nights later, Miss Jinny recognized her father's hand in a timid tap at the door. She opened it, and he stood before her, with a valise in his hand, equipped as for a journey. "I takes the stage to-night, Jinny, dear, from Four Forks to 'Frisco. Maybe I may drop in on Jack afore I go. I'll be back in a week. Good-by."

"Good-by." He still held her hand. Presently he drew her back into the room, closing the door carefully, and glancing around. There was a look of profound cunning in his eye as he said slowly, —

"Bear up and keep dark, Jinny, dear, and trust to the old man. Various men has various ways. Thar is ways as is common and ways as is oncommon, ways as is easy and ways as is oneasy. Bear up and keep dark." With this Delphic utterance he put his finger to his lips and vanished.

It was ten o'clock when he reached Four Forks. A few minutes later he stood on the threshold of that dwelling

described by the Four Forks "Sentinel" as "the palatial residence of John Ashe," and known to the local satirist as the "ash-box." "Hevin' to lay by two hours, John," he said to his prospective son-in-law, as he took his hand at the door, "a few words of social converse, not on business, but strictly private, seems to be about as nat'ral a thing as a man can do." This introduction, evidently the result of some study and plainly committed to memory, seemed so satisfactory to Mr. M'Closky that he repeated it again, after John Ashe had led him into his private office, where, depositing his valise in the middle of the floor, and sitting down before it, he began carefully to avoid the eye of his host. John Ashe, a tall, dark, handsome Kentuckian — with whom even the trifles of life were evidently full of serious import — waited with a kind of chivalrous respect the further speech of his guest. Being utterly devoid of any sense of the ridiculous, he always accepted Mr. M'Closky as a grave fact, singular only from his own want of experience of the class.

"Ores is running light now," said Mr. M'Closky, with easy indifference.

John Ashe returned that he had noticed the same fact in the receipts of the mill at Four Forks.

Mr. M'Closky rubbed his beard and looked at his valise, as if for sympathy and suggestion.

"You don't reckon on having any trouble with any of them chaps ez you cut out with Jinny?"

John Ashe, rather haughtily, had never thought of that. "I saw Rance hanging round your house the other night when I took your daughter home, but he gave me a wide berth," he added carelessly.

"Surely," said Mr. M'Closky, with a peculiar winking of the eye. After a pause, he took a fresh departure from his valise.

"A few words, John, ez between man and man, ez

between my daughter's father and her husband who expects to be, is about the thing, I take it, as is fair and square. I kem here to say them. They 're about Jinny, my gal."

Ashe's grave face brightened, to Mr. M'Closky's evident discomposure.

"Maybe I should have said, about her mother; but the same bein' a stranger to you, I says, nat'rally, 'Jinny.'"

Ashe nodded courteously. Mr. M'Closky, with his eyes on his valise, went on: —

"It is sixteen year ago as I married Mrs. M'Closky in the State of Missouri. She let on, at the time, to be a widder, — a widder with one child. When I say let on, I mean to imply that I subsequently found out that she was not a widder, nor a wife, and the father of the child was, so to speak, onbeknownst. Thet child was Jinny — my gal."

With his eyes on his valise, and quietly ignoring the wholly crimsoned face and swiftly darkening brow of his host, he continued, —

"Many little things sorter tended to make our home in Missouri onpleasant. A disposition to smash furniture and heave knives around, an inclination to howl when drunk, and that frequent; a habitooal use of vulgar language, and a tendency to cuss the casooal visitor, seemed to pint," added Mr. M'Closky with submissive hesitation — "thet — she — was — so to speak — quite onsuited to the marriage relation in its holiest aspeck."

"Damnation! Why did n't" — burst out John Ashe, erect and furious.

"At the end of two year," continued Mr. M'Closky, still intent on the valise, "I allowed I 'd get a diworce. Et about thet time, however, Providence sends a circus into thet town and a feller ez rode three hosses to onct. Hevin' allez a taste for athletic sports, she left town with this feller, leavin' me and Jinny behind. I sent word to her

thet if she would give Jinny to me we'd call it quits. And she did."

"Tell me," gasped Ashe, "did you ask your daughter to keep this from me, or did she do it of her own accord?"

"She does n't know it," said Mr. M'Closky; "she thinks I 'm her father and that her mother 's dead."

"Then, sir, this is your" —

"I don't know," said Mr. M'Closky slowly, "ez I 've asked any one to marry my Jinny. I don't know ez I 've persood that ez a biziness, or even taken it up as a healthful recreation."

John Ashe paced the room furiously. Mr. M'Closky's eyes left the valise and followed him curiously. "Where is this woman?" demanded Ashe suddenly. M'Closky's eyes sought the valise again.

"She went to Kansas; from Kansas she went into Texas. From Texas she eventoooally came to Californy. Being here, I 've purvided her with money — when her business was slack — through a friend."

John Ashe groaned. "She 's gettin' rather old and shaky for hosses, and now does the tight-rope business and flying-trapeze. Never hevin' seen her perform," continued Mr. M'Closky, with conscientious caution, "I can't say how she gets on. On the bills she looks well. Thar is a poster," said Mr. M'Closky, glancing at Ashe, and opening his valise, — "thar is a poster givin' her performance at Marysville next month." Mr. M'Closky slowly unfolded a large yellow and blue printed poster, profusely illustrated. "She calls herself 'Mam'selle J. Miglawski, — the great Russian Trapeziste.'"

John Ashe tore it from his hand. "Of course," he said, suddenly facing Mr. M'Closky, "you don't expect me to go on with this?"

Mr. M'Closky picked up the poster, carefully refolded it, and returned it to his valise. "When you break off with

Jinny," he said quietly, "I don't want anything said 'bout this. She does n't know it. She 's a woman, and I reckon you 're a white man."

"But what am I to say? How am I to go back of my word?"

"Write her a note. Say something hez come to your knowledge — don't say what — that makes you break it off. You need n't be afeard Jinny 'll ever ask you what."

John Ashe hesitated. He felt he had been cruelly wronged. No gentleman — no Ashe — could go on further in this affair. It was preposterous to think of it. But somehow he felt at the moment very unlike a gentleman or an Ashe, and was quite sure he should break down under Jinny's steady eyes. But then — he could write to her.

"So ores is about as light here as on the Ridge. Well, I reckon they 'll come up before the rains. Good-night." Mr. M'Closky took the hand that his host mechanically extended, shook it gravely, and was gone.

When Mr. M'Closky, a week later, stepped again upon his own veranda, he saw through the French window the figure of a man in his parlor. Under his hospitable roof the sight was not unusual, but for an instant a subtle sense of disappointment thrilled him. When he saw it was not the face of Ashe turned toward him he was relieved; but when he saw the tawny beard and quick, passionate eyes of Henry Rance he felt a new sense of apprehension, so that he fell to rubbing his beard almost upon his very threshold.

Jinny ran into the hall, and seized her father with a little cry of joy. "Father," said Jinny, in a hurried whisper, "don't mind *him*" — indicating Rance with a toss of her yellow braids; "he 's going soon, and I think, father, I 've done him wrong. But it 's all over with John and me now; read that note, and see how he 's insulted me." Her lip quivered, but she went on: "It 's Ridgeway that he means, father, and I believe it was *his* hand struck Ridgeway down,

or that he knows who did. But hush, now; not a word."

She gave him a feverish kiss, and glided back into the parlor, leaving Mr. M'Closky perplexed and irresolute with the note in his hand. He glanced at it hurriedly and saw that it was couched in almost the very words he had suggested. But a sudden apprehensive recollection came over him; he listened, and with an exclamation of dismay he seized his hat and ran out of the house. But too late; at the same moment a quick, nervous footstep was heard upon the veranda, the French window flew open, and with a light laugh of greeting Ridgeway stepped into the room.

Jinny's finer ear first caught the step, Jinny's swifter feelings had sounded the depths of hope, of joy, of despair before he entered the room. Jinny's pale face was the only one that met his, self-possessed and self-reliant, when he stood before them. An angry flush suffused even the pink roots of Rance's beard as he rose to his feet; an ominous fire sprang into Ridgeway's eyes, and a spasm of hate and scorn passed over the lower part of his face and left the mouth and jaw immobile and rigid.

Yet he was the first to speak. "I owe you an apology," he said to Jinny, with a suave scorn that brought the indignant blood back to her cheek, "for this intrusion, but I ask no pardon for withdrawing from the only spot where that man dare confront me with safety."

With an exclamation of rage, Rance sprang toward him. But as quickly Jinny stood between them, erect and menacing. "There must be no quarrel here," she said to Rance. "While I protect your right as my guest, don't oblige me to remind you of mine as your hostess." She turned with a half-deprecatory air to Ridgeway, but he was gone. So was her father. Only Rance remained, with a look of ill-concealed triumph on his face.

Without looking at him she passed toward the door.

When she reached it she turned. "You asked me a question an hour ago. Come to me in the garden at nine o'clock to-night and I will answer you. But promise me first to keep away from Mr. Dent; give me your word not to seek him — to avoid him if he seeks you. Do you promise? It is well."

He would have taken her hand, but she waved him away. In another moment he heard the swift rustle of her dress in the hall, the sound of her feet upon the stair, the sharp closing of her bedroom door, and all was quiet.

And even thus quietly the day wore away, and the night rose slowly from the valley and overshadowed the mountains with purple wings that fanned the still air into a breeze, until the moon followed it and lulled everything to rest as with the laying on of white and benedictory hands. It was a lovely night, but Henry Rance, waiting impatiently beneath a sycamore at the foot of the garden, saw no beauty in earth or air or sky. A thousand suspicions common to a jealous nature, a vague superstition of the spot, filled his mind with distrust and doubt. "If this should be a trick to keep my hands off that insolent pup!" he muttered — but even as the thought passed his tongue, a white figure slid from the shrubbery near the house, glided along the line of picket fence, and then stopped, midway, motionless in the moonlight.

It was she. But he scarcely recognized her in the white drapery that covered her head and shoulders and breast. He approached her with a hurried whisper. "Let us withdraw from the moonlight. Everybody can see us here."

"We have nothing to say that cannot be said in the moonlight, Henry Rance," she replied, coldly receding from his proffered hand. She trembled for a moment, as if with a chill, and then suddenly turned upon him: "Hold up your head, and let me look at you! I 've known only what men are; let me see what a traitor looks like!"

He recoiled more from her wild face than her words.

He saw for the first time that her hollow cheeks and hollow eyes were blazing with fever. He was no coward, but he would have fled.

"You are ill, Jinny," he said; "you had best return to the house. Another time" —

"Stop!" she cried hoarsely; "move from this spot, and I'll call for help! Attempt to leave me now, and I'll proclaim you the assassin that you are!"

"It was a fair fight," he said doggedly.

"Was it a fair fight to creep behind an unarmed and unsuspecting man? Was it a fair fight to try to throw suspicion on some one else? Was it a fair fight to deceive me? Liar and coward that you are!"

He made a stealthy step toward her with evil eyes, and a wickeder hand that crept within his breast. She saw the motion, but it only stung her to newer fury.

"Strike!" she said, with blazing eyes, throwing her hands open before him. "Strike! Are you afraid of the woman who dares you? or do you keep your knife for the backs of unsuspecting men? Strike! I tell you! No? Look then!" With a sudden movement she tore from her head and shoulders the thick lace shawl that had concealed her figure and stood before him. "Look!" she cried passionately, pointing to the bosom and shoulders of her white dress, darkly streaked with faded stains and ominous discoloration. "Look! This is the dress I wore that morning when I found him lying here — *here* — bleeding from your cowardly knife. Look! Do you see? This is his blood — my darling boy's blood! — one drop of which, dead and faded as it is, is more precious to me than the whole living pulse of any other man! Look! I come to you to-night christened with his blood and dare you to strike — dare you to strike him again through me and mingle my blood with his! Strike, I implore you! Strike! if you have any pity on me — for God's sake! Strike! if you are a man! Look! Here

lay his head on my shoulder; here I held him to my breast, where never — so help me, my God! — another man — Ah!" —

She reeled against the fence, and something that had flashed in Rance's hand dropped at her feet; for another flash and report rolled him over in the dust, and across his writhing body two men strode and caught her ere she fell.

"She has only fainted," said Mr. M'Closky. "Jinny, dear, my girl, speak to me!"

"What is this on her dress?" said Ridgeway, kneeling beside her, and lifting his set and colorless face. At the sound of his voice the color came faintly back to her cheek; she opened her eyes and smiled.

"It 's only your blood, dear boy," she said; "but look a little deeper and you 'll find my own."

She put up her two yearning hands and drew his face and lips down to her own. When Ridgeway raised his head again her eyes were closed, but her mouth still smiled as with the memory of a kiss.

They bore her to the house, still breathing, but unconscious. That night the road was filled with clattering horsemen, and the summoned skill of the country-side for leagues away gathered at her couch. The wound, they said, was not essentially dangerous, but they had grave fears of the shock to a system that already seemed suffering from some strange and unaccountable nervous exhaustion. The best medical skill of Tuolumne happened to be young and observing, and waited patiently an opportunity to account for it. He was presently rewarded.

For toward morning she rallied and looked feebly around. Then she beckoned her father toward her, and whispered, "Where is he?"

"They took him away, Jinny, dear, in a cart. He won't trouble you agin." He stopped, for Miss Jinny had raised

herself on her elbow, and was leveling her black brows at him. But two kicks from the young surgeon, and a significant motion toward the door, sent Mr. M'Closky away, muttering, "How should I know that '*he*' meant Ridgeway?" he said apologetically, as he went and returned with the young gentleman. The surgeon, who was still holding her pulse, smiled, and thought that with a little care — and attention — the stimulants — might be — diminished — and — he — might leave — the patient for some hours, with perfect safety. He would give further directions to Mr. M'Closky — downstairs.

It was with great archness of manner that half an hour later Mr. M'Closky entered the room with a preparatory cough, and it was with some disappointment that he found Ridgeway standing quietly by the window, and his daughter apparently fallen into a light doze. He was still more concerned when, after Ridgeway had retired, noticing a pleasant smile playing about her lips, he said softly, —

"You was thinking of some one, Jinny?"

"Yes, father" — the gray eyes met his steadily — "of poor John Ashe!"

Her recovery was swift. Nature, that had seemed to stand jealously aloof from her in her mental anguish, was kind to the physical hurt of her favorite child. The superb physique which had been her charm and her trial now stood her in good stead. The healing balsam of the pine, the balm of resinous gums, and the rare medicaments of Sierran altitudes touched her, as it might have touched the wounded doe. So that in two weeks she was able to walk about, and when at the end of the month Ridgeway returned from a flying visit to San Francisco, and jumped from the Wingdam coach at four o'clock in the morning, The Rose of Tuolumne, with the dewy petals of either cheek fresh as when first unfolded to his kiss, confronted him on the road.

With a common instinct their young feet both climbed

the little hill now sacred to their thought. When they reached its summit they were both, I think, a little disappointed. There is a fragrance in the unfolding of a passion that escapes the perfect flower. Jinny thought the night was not as beautiful; Ridgeway, that the long ride had blunted his perceptions. But they had the frankness to confess it to each other, with the rare delight of such a confession and the comparison of details which they thought each had forgotten. And with this and an occasional pitying reference to the blank period when they had not known each other, hand in hand, they reached the house.

Mr. M'Closky was awaiting them impatiently upon the veranda. When Miss Jinny had slipped upstairs to replace a collar that stood somewhat suspiciously awry, Mr. M'Closky drew Ridgeway solemnly aside. He held a large theatre poster in one hand, and an open newspaper in the other.

"I allus said," he remarked slowly, with the air of merely renewing a suspended conversation, — "I allus said that riding three hosses to onct was n't exactly in her line. It would seem that it ain't. From remarks in this *yer* paper, it would appear that she tried it on at Marysville last week and broke her neck."

A MONTE FLAT PASTORAL

HOW OLD MAN PLUNKETT WENT HOME

I THINK we all loved him. Even after he mismanaged the affairs of the Amity Ditch Company, we commiserated him, although most of us were stockholders and lost heavily. I remember that the blacksmith went so far as to say that "them chaps as put that responsibility on the old man oughter be lynched." But the blacksmith was not a stockholder, and the expression was looked upon as the excusable extravagance of a large sympathizing nature, that, when combined with a powerful frame, was unworthy of notice. At least, that was the way they put it. Yet I think there was a general feeling of regret that this misfortune would interfere with the old man's long-cherished plan of "going home."

Indeed, for the last ten years he had been "going home." He was going home after a six months' sojourn at Monte Flat. He was going home after the first rains. He was going home when the rains were over. He was going home when he had cut the timber on Buckeye Hill, when there was pasture on Dow's Flat, when he struck pay-dirt on Eureka Hill, when the Amity Company paid its first dividend, when the election was over, when he had received an answer from his wife. And so the years rolled by; the spring rains came and went, the woods of Buckeye Hill were level with the ground, the pasture of Dow's Flat grew sere and dry, Eureka Hill yielded its pay-dirt and swamped its owner, the first dividends of the Amity Company were made from the assessments of stockholders, there were

new county officers at Monte Flat, his wife's answer had changed into a persistent question, — and still old man Plunkett remained.

It is only fair to say that he had made several distinct essays towards going. Five years before he had bidden good-by to Monte Hill with much effusion and hand-shaking. But he never got any farther than the next town. Here he was induced to trade the sorrel colt he was riding for a bay mare, — a transaction that at once opened to his lively fancy a vista of vast and successful future speculation. A few days after, Abner Dean of Angel's received a letter from him stating that he was going to Visalia to buy horses. "I am satisfied," wrote Plunkett, with that elevated rhetoric for which his correspondence was remarkable, — "I am satisfied that we are at last developing the real resources of California. The world will yet look to Dow's Flat as the great stock-raising centre. In view of the interests involved I have deferred my departure for a month." It was two months before he again returned to us, penniless. Six months later he was again enabled to start for the Eastern States, and this time he got as far as San Francisco. I have before me a letter which I received a few days after his arrival, from which I venture to give an extract: "You know, my dear boy, that I have always believed that gambling, as it is absurdly called, is still in its infancy in California. I have always maintained that a perfect system might be invented, by which the game of poker may be made to yield a certain percentage to the intelligent player. I am not at liberty at present to disclose the system, but before leaving this city I intend to perfect it." He seems to have done so, and returned to Monte Flat with two dollars and thirty-seven cents, the absolute remainder of his capital after such perfection.

It was not until 1868 that he appeared to have finally succeeded in going home. He left us by the overland route,

— a route which he declared would give great opportunity for the discovery of undeveloped resources. His last letter was dated Virginia City. He was absent three years. At the close of a very hot day in midsummer he alighted from the Wingdam stage with hair and beard powdered with dust and age. There was a certain shyness about his greeting, quite different from his usual frank volubility, that did not, however, impress us as any accession of character. For some days he was reserved regarding his recent visit, contenting himself with asserting, with more or less aggressiveness, that he had "always said he was going home, and now he had been there." Later, he grew more communicative, and spoke freely and critically of the manners and customs of New York and Boston, commented on the social changes in the years of his absence, and, I remember, was very hard upon what he deemed the follies incidental to a high state of civilization. Still later, he darkly alluded to the moral laxity of the higher planes of Eastern society, but it was not long before he completely tore away the veil and revealed the naked wickedness of New York social life in a way I even now shudder to recall. Vinous intoxication, it appeared, was a common habit of the first ladies of the city; immoralities which he scarcely dared name were daily practiced by the refined of both sexes; niggardliness and greed were the common vices of the rich. "I have always asserted," he continued, "that corruption must exist where luxury and riches are rampant, and capital is not used to develop the natural resources of the country. — Thank you, I will take mine without sugar." It is possible that some of these painful details crept into the local journals. I remember an editorial in the "Monte Flat Monitor," entitled "The Effete East," in which the fatal decadence of New York and New England was elaborately stated, and California offered as a means of natural salvation. "Perhaps," said the "Monitor," "we might add

that Calaveras County offers superior inducements to the Eastern visitor with capital."

Later he spoke of his family. The daughter he had left a child had grown into beautiful womanhood; the son was already taller and larger than his father, and in a playful trial of strength, "the young rascal," added Plunkett, with a voice broken with paternal pride and humorous objurgation, had twice thrown his doting parent to the ground. But it was of his daughter he chiefly spoke. Perhaps emboldened by the evident interest which masculine Monte Flat held in feminine beauty, he expatiated at some length on her various charms and accomplishments, and finally produced her photograph — that of a very pretty girl — to their infinite peril. But his account of his first meeting with her was so peculiar that I must fain give it after his own methods, which were, perhaps, some shades less precise and elegant than his written style.

"You see, boys, it 's always been my opinion that a man oughter be able to tell his own flesh and blood by instinct. It 's ten years since I 'd seen my Melindy, and she was then only seven, and about so high. So when I went to New York, what did I do? Did I go straight to my house and ask for my wife and daughter, like other folks? No, sir! I rigged myself up as a peddler, — as a peddler, sir, — and I rung the bell. When the servant came to the door, I wanted, don't you see, to show the ladies some trinkets. Then there was a voice over the banister, says, 'Don't want anything — send him away.' 'Some nice laces, ma'am, smuggled,' I says, looking up. 'Get out, you wretch,' says she. I knew the voice, boys, — it was my wife; sure as a gun — thar was n't any instinct thar. 'Maybe the young ladies want somethin',' I said. 'Did you hear me?' says she, and with that she jumps forward, and I left. It 's ten years, boys, since I 've seen the old woman, but somehow, when she fetched that leap, I naterally left."

He had been standing beside the bar — his usual attitude — when he made this speech, but at this point he half-faced his auditors with a look that was very effective. Indeed, a few, who had exhibited some signs of skepticism and lack of interest, at once assumed an appearance of intense gratification and curiosity as he went on.

"Well, by hangin' round there for a day or two, I found out at last it was to be Melindy's birthday next week, and that she was goin' to have a big party. I tell ye what, boys, it were n't no slouch of a reception. The whole house was bloomin' with flowers, and blazin' with lights, and there was no end of servants and plate and refreshments and fixin's" —

"Uncle Joe."

"Well?"

"Where did they get the money?"

Plunkett faced his interlocutor with a severe glance. "I always said," he replied slowly, "that when I went home, I'd send on ahead of me a draft for ten thousand dollars. I always said that, did n't I? Eh? And I said I was goin' home — and I've been home — have n't I? Well?"

Either there was something irresistibly conclusive in this logic, or else the desire to hear the remainder of Plunkett's story was stronger, but there was no more interruption. His ready good humor quickly returned, and, with a slight chuckle, he went on.

"I went to the biggest jewelry shop in town, and I bought a pair of diamond earrings and put them in my pocket, and went to the house. 'What name?' says the chap who opened the door, and he looked like a cross 'twixt a restaurant waiter and a parson. 'Skeesicks,' said I. He takes me in, and pretty soon my wife comes sailin' into the parlor, and says, 'Excuse me, but I don't think I recognize the name.' She was mighty polite, for I had

on a red wig and side-whiskers. 'A friend of your husband's from California, ma'am, with a present for your daughter, Miss' — and I made as I had forgot the name. But all of a sudden a voice said, 'That's too thin,' and in walked Melindy. 'It's playin' it rather low down, father, to pretend you don't know your daughter's name — ain't it now? How are you, old man?' And with that she tears off my wig and whiskers, and throws her arms around my neck, — instinct, sir, pure instinct!"

Emboldened by the laughter which followed his description of the filial utterances of Melinda, he again repeated her speech, with more or less elaboration, joining in with, and indeed often leading, the hilarity that accompanied it, and returning to it with more or less incoherency, several times during the evening.

And so at various times, and at various places — but chiefly in bar-rooms — did this Ulysses of Monte Flat recount the story of his wanderings. There were several discrepancies in his statement, there was sometimes considerable prolixity of detail, there was occasional change of character and scenery, there was once or twice an absolute change in the dénouement, but always the fact of his having visited his wife and children remained. Of course in a skeptical community like that of Monte Flat — a community accustomed to great expectation and small realization — a community wherein, to use the local dialect, "they got the color and struck hardpan" more frequently than any other mining camp — in such a community the fullest credence was not given to old man Plunkett's facts. There was only one exception to the general unbelief, — Henry York of Sandy Bar. It was he who was always an attentive listener; it was his scant purse that had often furnished Plunkett with means to pursue his unprofitable speculations; it was to him that the charms of Melinda were more frequently rehearsed; it was he that had bor

rowed her photograph; and it was he that, sitting alone in his little cabin one night, kissed that photograph until his honest, handsome face glowed again in the firelight.

It was dusty in Monte Flat. The ruins of the long, dry season were crumbling everywhere; everywhere the dying summer had strewn its red ashes a foot deep, or exhaled its last breath in a red cloud above the troubled highways. The alders and cottonwoods that marked the line of the water-courses were grimy with dust, and looked as if they might have taken root in the open air; the gleaming stones of the parched water-courses themselves were dry as bones in the valley of death. The dusty sunset at times painted the flanks of the distant hills a dull, coppery hue; on other days there was an odd, indefinable earthquake halo on the volcanic cones of the farther coast-spurs; again, an acid, resinous smoke from the burning wood on Heavytree Hill smarted the eyes and choked the free breath of Monte Flat, or a fierce wind, driving everything — including the shriveled summer like a curled leaf — before it, swept down the flanks of the Sierras and chased the inhabitants to the doors of their cabins, and shook its red fist in at their windows. And on such a night as this — the dust having, in some way, choked the wheels of material progress in Monte Flat — most of the inhabitants were gathered listlessly in the gilded bar-room of the Moquelumne Hotel, spitting silently at the red-hot stove that tempered the mountain winds to the shorn lambs of Monte Flat, and waiting for the rain.

Every method known to the Flat of beguiling the time until the advent of this long-looked-for phenomenon had been tried. It is true the methods were not many, being limited chiefly to that form of popular facetiæ known as practical joking; and even this had assumed the seriousness of a business pursuit. Tommy Roy, who had spent two hours in digging a ditch in front of his own door — into which a few friends casually dropped during the evening —

looked *ennuyé* and dissatisfied; the four prominent citizens, who, disguised as footpads, had stopped the County Treasurer on the Wingdam road, were jaded from their playful efforts next morning; the principal physician and lawyer of Monte Flat, who had entered into an unhallowed conspiracy to compel the Sheriff of Calaveras and his posse to serve a writ of ejectment on a grizzly bear, feebly disguised under the name of "one Major Ursus," who haunted the groves of Heavytree Hill, wore an expression of resigned weariness. Even the editor of the "Monte Flat Monitor," who had that morning written a glowing account of a battle with the Wipneck Indians for the benefit of Eastern readers — even *he* looked grave and worn. When, at last, Abner Dean of Angel's, who had been on a visit to San Francisco, walked into the room, he was, of course, victimized in the usual way by one or two apparently honest questions which ended in his answering them, and then falling into the trap of asking another to his utter and complete shame and mortification — but that was all. Nobody laughed, and Abner, although a victim, did not lose his good humor. He turned quietly on his tormentors and said, —

"I've got something better than that — you know old man Plunkett?"

Everybody simultaneously spat at the stove and nodded his head.

"You know he went home three years ago?" Two or three changed the position of their legs from the backs of different chairs, and one man said, "Yes."

"Had a good time home?"

Everybody looked cautiously at the man who had said "Yes," and he, accepting the responsibility with a faint-hearted smile, said, "Yes," again, and breathed hard.

"Saw his wife and child, — purty gal?" said Abner cautiously.

"Yes," answered the man doggedly.

"Saw her photograph, perhaps?" continued Abner Dean quietly.

The man looked hopelessly around for support. Two or three who had been sitting near him, and evidently encouraging him with a look of interest, now shamelessly abandoned him and looked another way. Henry York flushed a little and veiled his brown eyes. The man hesitated, and then with a sickly smile that was intended to convey the fact that he was perfectly aware of the object of this questioning, and was only humoring it from abstract good feeling, returned, "Yes," again.

"Sent home — let 's see — ten thousand dollars, was n't it?" Abner Dean went on.

"Yes," reiterated the man, with the same smile.

"Well, I thought so," said Abner quietly; "but the fact is, you see, that he never went home at all — nary time."

Everybody stared at Abner in genuine surprise and interest, as with provoking calmness and a half-lazy manner he went on.

"You see, thar was a man down in 'Frisco as knowed him and saw him in Sonora during the whole of that three years. He was herding sheep or tending cattle, or spekilating all that time, and had n't a red cent. Well, it 'mounts to this, — that 'ar Plunkett ain't been east of the Rocky Mountains since '49."

The laugh which Abner Dean had the right to confidently expect came, but it was bitter and sardonic. I think indignation was apparent in the minds of his hearers. It was felt, for the first time, that there was a limit to practical joking. A deception carried on for a year, compromising the sagacity of Monte Flat, was deserving the severest reprobation. Of course nobody had believed Plunkett; but then the supposition that it might be believed in adjacent

camps that they *had* believed him was gall and bitterness. The lawyer thought that an indictment for obtaining money under false pretenses might be found; the physician had long suspected him of insanity, and was not certain but that he ought to be confined. The four prominent merchants thought that the business interests of Monte Flat demanded that something should be done. In the midst of an excited and angry discussion the door slowly opened, and old man Plunkett staggered into the room.

He had changed pitifully in the last six months. His hair was a dusty yellowish-gray, like the chemisal on the flanks of Heavytree Hill; his face was waxen-white and blue and puffy under the eyes; his clothes were soiled and shabby, — streaked in front with the stains of hurried luncheons eaten standing, and fluffy behind with the wool and hair of hurriedly extemporized couches. In obedience to that odd law, that the more seedy and soiled a man's garments become the less does he seem inclined to part with them, even during that portion of the twenty-four hours when they are deemed least essential, Plunkett's clothes had gradually taken on the appearance of a kind of bark, or an outgrowth from within, for which their possessor was not entirely responsible. Howbeit, as he entered the room he attempted to button his coat over a dirty shirt, and passed his fingers, after the manner of some animal, over his cracker-strewn beard — in recognition of a cleanly public sentiment. But even as he did so the weak smile faded from his lips, and his hand, after fumbling aimlessly around a button, dropped helplessly at his side. For, as he leaned his back against the bar and faced the group, he for the first time became aware that every eye but one was fixed upon him. His quick, nervous apprehension at once leaped to the truth. His miserable secret was out and abroad in the very air about him. As a last resort, he glanced despairingly at Henry York, but his flushed face was turned toward the windows.

No word was spoken. As the barkeeper silently swung a decanter and glass before him, he took a cracker from a dish and mumbled it with affected unconcern. He lingered over his liquor, until its potency stiffened his relaxed sinews and dulled the nervous edge of his apprehension, and then he suddenly faced around. "It don't look as if we were goin' to hev any rain much afore Christmas," he said with defiant ease.

No one made any reply.

"Just like this in '52 and again in '60. It 's always been my opinion that these dry seasons come reg'lar. I 've said it afore. I say it again. It 's jist as I said about going home, you know," he added with desperate recklessness.

"Thar 's a man," said Abner Dean lazily, "ez sez you never went home. Thar 's a man ez sez you 've been three years in Sonora. Thar 's a man ez sez you hain't seen your wife and daughter since '49. Thar 's a man ez sez you 've been playin' this camp for six months."

There was a dead silence. Then a voice said, quite as quietly, —

"That man lies."

It was not the old man's voice. Everybody turned as Henry York slowly rose, stretching out his six feet of length, and, brushing away the ashes that had fallen from his pipe upon his breast, deliberately placed himself beside Plunkett, and faced the others.

"That man ain't here," continued Abner Dean with listless indifference of voice and a gentle preoccupation of manner, as he carelessly allowed his right hand to rest on his hip near his revolver. "That man ain't here, but if I 'm called upon to make good what he says, why, I 'm on hand."

All rose as the two men — perhaps the least externally agitated of them all — approached each other. The lawyer stepped in between them.

"Perhaps there 's some mistake here. York, do you *know* that the old man has been home?"

"Yes."

"How do you know it?"

York turned his clear, honest, frank eyes on his questioner, and without a tremor told the only direct and unmitigated lie of his life. "Because I 've seen him there."

The answer was conclusive. It was known that York had been visiting the East during the old man's absence. The colloquy had diverted attention from Plunkett, who, pale and breathless, was staring at his unexpected deliverer. As he turned again toward his tormentors, there was something in the expression of his eye that caused those that were nearest to him to fall back, and sent a strange, indefinable thrill through the boldest and most reckless. As he made a step forward the physician almost unconsciously raised his hand with a warning gesture, and old man Plunkett, with his eyes fixed upon the red-hot stove, and an odd smile playing about his mouth, began, —

"Yes — of course you did. Who says you did n't? It ain't no lie; I said I was goin' home, and I 've been home. Have n't I? My God! I have. Who says I 've been lyin'? Who says I 'm dreamin'? Is it true — why don't you speak? It is true, after all. You say you saw me there — why don't you speak again? Say! Say! — is it true? It 's going now, O my God — it 's going again. It 's going now. Save me!" and with a fierce cry he fell forward in a fit upon the floor.

When the old man regained his senses he found himself in York's cabin. A flickering fire of pine boughs lit up the rude rafters, and fell upon a photograph tastefully framed with fir-cones, and hung above the brush whereon he lay. It was the portrait of a young girl. It was the first object to meet the old man's gaze, and it brought with it a flush of such painful consciousness that he started and glanced

quickly around. But his eyes only encountered those of York, — clear, brown, critical, and patient, and they fell again.

"Tell me, old man," said York, not unkindly, but with the same cold, clear tone in his voice that his eye betrayed a moment ago, — "tell me, is *that* a lie too?" and he pointed to the picture.

The old man closed his eyes, and did not reply. Two hours before the question would have stung him into some evasion or bravado. But the revelation contained in the question, as well as the tone of York's voice, was to him now, in his pitiable condition, a relief. It was plain even to his confused brain that York had lied when he had indorsed his story in the bar-room; it was clear to him now that he had not been home — that he was not, as he had begun to fear, going mad. It was such a relief that, with characteristic weakness, his former recklessness and extravagance returned. He began to chuckle — finally, to laugh uproariously.

York, with his eyes still fixed on the old man, withdrew the hand with which he had taken his.

"Did n't we fool 'em nicely, eh, Yorky? He! he! The biggest thing yet ever played in this camp! I always said I 'd play 'em all some day, and I have — played 'em for six months. Ain't it rich — ain't it the richest thing you ever seed? Did you see Abner's face when he spoke 'bout that man as seed me in Sonora? — wa'n't it good as the minstrels? Oh, it 's too much!" and striking his leg with the palm of his hand, he almost threw himself from the bed in a paroxysm of laughter — a paroxysm that, nevertheless, appeared to be half real and half affected.

"Is that photograph hers?" said York in a low voice, after a slight pause.

"Hers? No! It 's one of the San Francisco actresses. He! he! Don't you see — I bought it for two bits in one of

the bookstores. I never thought they 'd swaller *that* too! but they did! Oh, but the old man played 'em this time, did n't he — eh?" and he peered curiously in York's face.

"Yes, and he played *me* too," said York, looking steadily in the old man's eye.

"Yes, of course," interposed Plunkett hastily; "but you know, Yorky, you got out of it well! You 've sold 'em too. We 've both got 'em on a string now — you and me — got to stick together now. You did it well, Yorky, you did it well. Why, when you said you 'd seen me in York city, I 'm d—d if I did n't" —

"Did n't what?" said York gently, for the old man had stopped with a pale face and wandering eye.

"Eh?"

"You say when I said I had seen you in New York you thought" —

"You lie!" said the old man fiercely; "I did n't say I thought anything. What are you trying to go back on me for? Eh?" His hands were trembling as he rose, muttering, from the bed, and made his way toward the hearth.

"Gimme some whiskey," he said presently, "and dry up. You oughter treat, anyway. Them fellows oughter treated last night. By hookey, I 'd made 'em — only I fell sick."

York placed the liquor and a tin cup on the table beside him, and going to the door turned his back upon his guest and looked out on the night. Although it was clear moonlight the familiar prospect never to him seemed so dreary. The dead waste of the broad Wingdam highway never seemed so monotonous — so like the days that he had passed and were to come to him — so like the old man in its suggestion of going somewhere and never getting there. He turned, and going up to Plunkett put his hand upon his shoulder, and said, —

"I want you to answer one question fairly and squarely."

The liquor seemed to have warmed the torpid blood in

the old man's veins and softened his acerbity, for the face he turned up to York was mellowed in its rugged outline and more thoughtful in expression as he said, —

"Go on, my boy."

"Have you a wife and — daughter?"

"Before God, I have!"

The two men were silent for a moment, both gazing at the fire. Then Plunkett began rubbing his knees slowly.

"The wife, if it comes to that, ain't much," he began cautiously, "being a little on the shoulder, you know, and wantin', so to speak, a liberal California education — which makes, you know, a bad combination. It 's always been my opinion that there ain't any worse. Why, she 's as ready with her tongue as Abner Dean is with his revolver, only with the difference that she shoots from principle, as she calls it, and the consequence is she 's always layin' for you. It 's the effete East, my boy, that 's ruinin' her; it 's them ideas she gets in New York and Boston that 's made her and me what we are. I don't mind her havin' 'em if she did n't shoot. But havin' that propensity, them principles ought n't to be lying round loose no more 'n firearms."

"But your daughter?" said York.

The old man's hands went up to his eyes here, and then both hands and head dropped forward on the table. "Don't say anything 'bout her, my boy; don't ask me now." With one hand concealing his eyes he fumbled about with the other in his pockets for his handkerchief — but vainly. Perhaps it was owing to this fact that he repressed his tears, for when he removed his hand from his eyes they were quite dry. Then he found his voice.

"She 's a beautiful girl, — beautiful, though I say it; and you shall see her, my boy, — you shall see her, sure. I 've got things about fixed now. I shall have my plan for reducin' ores perfected in a day or two, and I 've got proposals from all the smeltin' works here" — here he hastily produced

a bundle of papers that fell upon the floor — "and I 'm goin' to send for 'em. I 've got the papers here as will give me ten thousand dollars clear in the next month," he added, as he strove to collect the valuable documents again. "I 'll have 'em here by Christmas, if I live, and you shall eat your Christmas dinner with me, York, my boy — you shall, sure."

With his tongue now fairly loosened by liquor and the suggestive vastness of his prospects, he rambled on more or less incoherently, elaborating and amplifying his plans — occasionally even speaking of them as already accomplished, until the moon rode high in the heavens, and York led him again to his couch. Here he lay for some time muttering to himself, until at last he sank into a heavy sleep. When York had satisfied himself of the fact, he gently took down the picture and frame, and, going to the hearth, tossed them on the dying embers, and sat down to see them burn.

The fir-cones leaped instantly into flame; then the features that had entranced San Francisco audiences nightly flashed up and passed away, — as such things are apt to pass, — and even the cynical smile on York's lips faded too. And then there came a supplemental and unexpected flash as the embers fell together, and by its light York saw a paper upon the floor. It was one that had fallen from the old man's pocket. As he picked it up listlessly a photograph slipped from its folds. It was the portrait of a young girl, and on its reverse was written, in a scrawling hand, "Melinda to Father."

It was at best a cheap picture; but, ah me! I fear even the deft graciousness of the highest art could not have softened the rigid angularities of that youthful figure, its self-complacent vulgarity, its cheap finery, its expressionless ill favor. York did not look at it the second time. He turned to the letter for relief.

It was misspelled, it was unpunctuated, it was almost

illegible, it was fretful in tone and selfish in sentiment. It was not, I fear, even original in the story of its woes. It was the harsh recital of poverty, of suspicion, of mean makeshifts and compromises, of low pains and lower longings, of sorrows that were degrading, of a grief that was pitiable. Yet it was sincere in a certain kind of vague yearning for the presence of the degraded man to whom it was written — an affection that was more like a confused instinct than a sentiment.

York folded it again carefully, and placed it beneath the old man's pillow. Then he returned to his seat by the fire. A smile that had been playing upon his face, deepening the curves behind his mustache and gradually overrunning his clear brown eyes, presently faded away. It was last to go from his eyes, and it left there — oddly enough to those who did not know him — a tear.

He sat there for a long time, leaning forward, his head upon his hands. The wind that had been striving with the canvas roof all at once lifted its edges, and a moonbeam slipped suddenly in, and lay for a moment like a shining blade upon his shoulder. And knighted by its touch, straightway plain Henry York arose — sustained, high-purposed, and self-reliant!

The rains had come at last. There was already a visible greenness on the slopes of Heavytree Hill, and the long white track of the Wingdam road was lost in outlying pools and ponds a hundred rods from Monte Flat. The spent water-courses, whose white bones had been sinuously trailed over the flat, like the vertebræ of some forgotten saurian, were full again; the dry bones moved once more in the valley, and there was joy in the ditches, and a pardonable extravagance in the columns of the "Monte Flat Monitor." "Never before in the history of the county has the yield been so satisfactory. Our contemporary of the 'Hillside Beacon,' who yesterday facetiously alluded to

the fact (?) that our best citizens were leaving town, in 'dug-outs,' on account of the flood, will be glad to hear that our distinguished fellow-townsman, Mr. Henry York, now on a visit to his relatives in the East, lately took with him, in his 'dug-out,' the modest sum of fifty thousand dollars, the result of one week's clean-up. We can imagine," continued that sprightly journal, "that no such misfortune is likely to overtake Hillside this season. And yet we believe the 'Beacon' man wants a railroad." A few journals broke out into poetry. The operator at Simpson's Crossing telegraphed to the Sacramento "Universe:" "All day the low clouds have shook their garnered fullness down." A San Francisco journal lapsed into noble verse, thinly distinguished as editorial prose: "Rejoice! the gentle rain has come, the bright and pearly rain, which scatters blessings on the hills, and sifts them o'er the plain. Rejoice," etc. Indeed, there was only one to whom the rain had not brought blessing, and that was Plunkett. In some mysterious and darksome way, it had interfered with the perfection of his new method of reducing ores, and thrown the advent of that invention back another season. It had brought him down to an habitual seat in the bar-room, where, to heedless and inattentive ears, he sat and discoursed of the East and his family.

No one disturbed him. Indeed, it was rumored that some funds had been lodged with the landlord, by a person or persons unknown, whereby his few wants were provided for. His mania — for that was the charitable construction which Monte Flat put upon his conduct — was indulged, even to the extent of Monte Flat's accepting his invitation to dine with his family on Christmas Day, — an invitation extended frankly to every one with whom the old man drank or talked. But one day, to everybody's astonishment, he burst into the bar-room, holding an open letter in his hand. It read as follows: —

Be ready to meet your family at the new cottage on Heavytree Hill on Christmas Day. Invite what friends you choose. HENRY YORK.

The letter was handed round in silence. The old man, with a look alternating between hope and fear, gazed in the faces of the group. The Doctor looked up significantly, after a pause. "It 's a forgery, evidently," he said in a low voice; "he 's cunning enough to conceive it, — they always are, — but you 'll find he 'll fail in executing it. Watch his face! Old man," he said suddenly, in a loud, peremptory tone, "this is a trick — a forgery — and you know it. Answer me squarely, and look me in the eye. Is n't it so?"

The eyes of Plunkett stared a moment, and then dropped weakly. Then, with a feebler smile, he said, "You 're too many for me, boys. The Doc 's right. The little game 's up. You can take the old man's hat," and so, tottering, trembling, and chuckling, he dropped into silence and his accustomed seat. But the next day he seemed to have forgotten this episode, and talked as glibly as ever of the approaching festivity.

And so the days and weeks passed, until Christmas — a bright, clear day, warmed with south winds, and joyous with the resurrection of springing grasses — broke upon Monte Flat. And then there was a sudden commotion in the hotel bar-room, and Abner Dean stood beside the old man's chair, and shook him out of a slumber to his feet. "Rouse up, old man! York is here, with your wife and daughter at the cottage on Heavytree. Come, old man. Here, boys, give him a lift," and in another moment a dozen strong and willing hands had raised the old man, and bore him in triumph to the street, up the steep grade of Heavytree Hill, and deposited him, struggling and confused, in the porch of a little cottage. At the same instant, two

women rushed forward, but were restrained by a gesture from Henry York. The old man was struggling to his feet. With an effort, at last, he stood erect, trembling, his eye fixed, a gray pallor on his cheek, and a deep resonance in his voice.

"It 's all a trick, and a lie! They ain't no flesh and blood or kin o' mine. It ain't my wife, nor child. My daughter 's a beautiful girl — a beautiful girl — d' ye hear? She 's in New York, with her mother, and I 'm going to fetch her here. I said I 'd go home, and I 've been home — d' ye hear me? — I 've been home! It 's a mean trick you 're playin' on the old man. Let me go, d' ye hear? Keep them women off me! Let me go! I 'm going — I 'm going home!"

His hands were thrown up convulsively in the air, and, half turning round, he fell sideways on the porch, and so to the ground. They picked him up hurriedly; but too late. He had gone home.

BABY SYLVESTER

It was at a little mining camp in the California Sierras that he first dawned upon me in all his grotesque sweetness.

I had arrived early in the morning, but not in time to intercept the friend who was the object of my visit. He had gone "prospecting," — so they told me on the river, — and would not probably return until late in the afternoon. They could not say what direction he had taken; they could not suggest that I would be likely to find him if I followed. But it was the general opinion that I had better wait.

I looked around me. I was standing upon the bank of the river; and, apparently, the only other human beings in the world were my interlocutors, who were even then just disappearing from my horizon down the steep bank toward the river's dry bed. I approached the edge of the bank.

Where could I wait?

Oh, anywhere; down with them on the river-bar, where they were working, if I liked! Or I could make myself at home in any of those cabins that I found lying round loose. Or, perhaps it would be cooler and pleasanter for me in my friend's cabin on the hill. Did I see those three large sugar-pines? And, a little to the right, a canvas roof and chimney over the bushes? Well that was my friend's — that was Dick Sylvester's cabin. I could stake my horse in that little hollow, and just hang round there till he came. I would find some books in the shanty; I could amuse myself with them. Or I could play with the baby.

Do what?

But they had already gone. I leaned over the bank and called after their vanishing figures, —

"What did you say I could do?"

The answer floated slowly up on the hot sluggish air, —

"Pla-a-y with the ba-by."

The lazy echoes took it up and tossed it languidly from hill to hill, until Bald Mountain opposite made some incoherent remark about the baby, and then all was still.

I must have been mistaken. My friend was not a man of family; there was not a woman within forty miles of the river-camp; he never was so passionately devoted to children to import a luxury so expensive. I must have been mistaken.

I turned my horse's head toward the hill. As we slowly climbed the narrow trail, the little settlement might have been some exhumed Pompeian suburb, so deserted and silent were its habitations. The open doors plainly disclosed each rudely furnished interior, — the rough pine table, with the scant equipage of the morning meal still standing; the wooden bunk, with its tumbled and disheveled blankets. A golden lizard — the very genius of desolate stillness — had stopped breathless upon the threshold of one cabin; a squirrel peeped impudently into the window of another; a woodpecker, with the general flavor of undertaking which distinguishes that bird, withheld his sepulchral hammer from the coffin-lid of the roof on which he was professionally engaged, as we passed. For a moment, I half regretted that I had not accepted the invitation to the river-bed; but, the next moment, a breeze swept up the long, dark cañon, and the waiting files of the pines beyond bent toward me in salutation. I think my horse understood as well as myself that it was the cabins that made the solitude human, and therefore unbearable, for he quickened his pace, and with a gentle trot brought me to the edge of the wood and the three pines that stood like videttes before the Sylvester outpost.

Unsaddling my horse in the little hollow, I unslung the long *riata* from the saddlebow, and tethering him to a young sapling, turned toward the cabin. But I had gone only a few steps when I heard a quick trot behind me, and poor Pomposo, with every fibre tingling with fear, was at my heels. I looked hurriedly around. The breeze had died away, and only an occasional breath from the deep-chested woods, more like a long sigh than any articulate sound, or the dry singing of a cicala in the heated cañon, were to be heard. I examined the ground carefully for rattlesnakes, but in vain. Yet here was Pomposo shivering from his arched neck to his sensitive haunches, his very flanks pulsating with terror. I soothed him as well as I could, and then walked to the edge of the wood and peered into its dark recesses. The bright flash of a bird's wing, or the quick dart of a squirrel, was all I saw. I confess it was with something of superstitious expectation that I again turned toward the cabin. A fairy child, attended by Titania and her train, lying in an expensive cradle, would not have surprised me; a Sleeping Beauty, whose awakening would have re-peopled these solitudes with life and energy, I am afraid I began to confidently look for, and would have kissed without hesitation.

But I found none of these. Here was the evidence of my friend's taste and refinement in the hearth swept scrupulously clean, in the picturesque arrangement of the fur skins that covered the floor and furniture, and the *serape*[1] lying on the wooden couch. Here were the walls fancifully papered with illustrations from the "London News;" here was the wood-cut portrait of Mr. Emerson over the chimney, quaintly framed with bluejays' wings; here were his few favorite books on the swinging-shelf; and here, lying upon the couch, the latest copy of "Punch." Dear Dick! The flour-sack was sometimes empty, but the gentle satirist seldom missed his weekly visit.

[1] A fine Mexican blanket, used as an outer garment for riding.

I threw myself on the couch and tried to read. But I soon exhausted my interest in my friend's library, and lay there staring through the open door on the green hillside beyond. The breeze again sprang up, and a delicious coolness, mixed with the rare incense of the woods, stole through the cabin. The slumbrous droning of bumblebees outside the canvas roof, the faint cawing of rooks on the opposite mountain, and the fatigue of my morning ride, began to droop my eyelids. I pulled the *serape* over me as a precaution against the freshening mountain breeze, and in a few moments was asleep.

I do not remember how long I slept. I must have been conscious, however, during my slumber, of my inability to keep myself covered by the *serape*, for I awoke once or twice clutching it with a despairing hand as it was disappearing over the foot of the couch. Then I became suddenly aroused to the fact that my efforts to retain it were resisted by some equally persistent force, and letting it go, I was horrified at seeing it swiftly drawn under the couch. At this point I sat up, completely awake; for immediately after, what seemed to be an exaggerated muff began to emerge from under the couch. Presently it appeared fully, dragging the *serape* after it. There was no mistaking it now — it was a baby bear. A mere suckling, it was true — a helpless roll of fat and fur — but unmistakably, a grizzly cub!

I cannot recall anything more irresistibly ludicrous than its aspect as it slowly raised its small wondering eyes to mine. It was so much taller in its haunches than its shoulders — its fore legs were so disproportionately small — that in walking its hind feet invariably took precedence. It was perpetually pitching forward over its pointed, inoffensive nose, and recovering itself always, after these involuntary somersaults, with the gravest astonishment. To add to its preposterous appearance, one of its hind feet was adorned by a shoe of Sylvester's, into which it had accidentally and

inextricably stepped. As this somewhat impeded its first impulse to fly, it turned to me; and then, possibly recognizing in the stranger the same species as its master, it paused. Presently, it slowly raised itself on its hind legs, and vaguely and deprecatingly waved a baby paw, fringed with little hooks of steel. I took the paw and shook it gravely. From that moment we were friends. The little affair of the *serape* was forgotten.

Nevertheless, I was wise enough to cement our friendship by an act of delicate courtesy. Following the direction of his eyes, I had no difficulty in finding, on a shelf near the ridge-pole, the sugar-box and the square lumps of white sugar that even the poorest miner is never without. While he was eating them I had time to examine him more closely. His body was a silky, dark, but exquisitely modulated gray, deepening to black in his paws and muzzle. His fur was excessively long, thick, and soft as eider-down, the cushions of flesh beneath perfectly infantine in their texture and contour. He was so very young that the palms of his half-human feet were still tender as a baby's. Except for the bright blue, steely hooks, half sheathed in his little toes, there was not a single harsh outline or detail in his plump figure. He was as free from angles as one of Leda's offspring. Your caressing hand sank away in his fur with dreamy languor. To look at him long was an intoxication of the senses; to pat him was a wild delirium; to embrace him, an utter demoralization of the intellectual faculties.

When he had finished the sugar he rolled out of the door with a half-diffident, half-inviting look in his eye, as if he expected me to follow. I did so, but the sniffing and snorting of the keen-scented Pomposo in the hollow, not only revealed the cause of his former terror, but decided me to take another direction. After a moment's hesitation he concluded to go with me, although I am satisfied, from a certain impish look in his eye, that he fully understood and

rather enjoyed the fright of Pomposo. As he rolled along at my side, with a gait not unlike a drunken sailor, I discovered that his long hair concealed a leather collar around his neck, which bore for its legend the single word, "Baby!" I recalled the mysterious suggestion of the two miners. This, then, was the "baby" with whom I was to "play."

How we "played;" how Baby allowed me to roll him down-hill, crawling and puffing up again each time, with perfect good humor; how he climbed a young sapling after my Panama hat, which I had "shied" into one of the topmost branches; how after getting it he refused to descend until it suited his pleasure; how when he did come down he persisted in walking about on three legs, carrying my hat, a crushed and shapeless mass, clasped to his breast with the remaining one; how I missed him at last, and finally discovered him seated on a table in one of the tenantless cabins, with a bottle of syrup between his paws, vainly endeavoring to extract its contents — these and other details of that eventful day I shall not weary the reader with now. Enough, that when Dick Sylvester returned, I was pretty well fagged out, and the baby was rolled up, an immense bolster at the foot of the couch, asleep. Sylvester's first words after our greeting were, —

"Is n't he delicious?"

"Perfectly. Where did you get him?"

"Lying under his dead mother, five miles from here," said Dick, lighting his pipe. "Knocked her over at fifty yards; perfectly clean shot — never moved afterwards! Baby crawled out, scared but unhurt. She must have been carrying him in her mouth, and dropped him when she faced me, for he was n't more than three days old, and not steady on his pins. He takes the only milk that comes to the settlement — brought up by Adams' Express at seven o'clock every morning. They say he looks like me. Do you think so?" asked Dick, with perfect gravity, stroking

his hay-colored mustaches, and evidently assuming his best expression.

I took leave of the baby early the next morning in Sylvester's cabin, and, out of respect for Pomposo's feelings, rode by without any postscript of expression. But the night before I had made Sylvester solemnly swear that, in the event of any separation between himself and Baby, it should revert to me. "At the same time," he had added, "it 's only fair to say that I don't think of dying just yet, old fellow, and I don't know of anything else that would part the cub and me."

Two months after this conversation, as I was turning over the morning's mail at my office in San Francisco, I noticed a letter bearing Sylvester's familiar hand. But it was postmarked "Stockton," and I opened it with some anxiety at once. Its contents were as follows: —

O Frank! don't you remember what we agreed upon anent the baby? Well, consider me as dead for the next six months, or gone where cubs can't follow me — East. I know you love the baby; but do you think, dear boy — now, really, do you think you *could* be a father to it? Consider this well. You are young, thoughtless, well-meaning enough; but dare you take upon yourself the functions of guide, genius, or guardian to one so young and guileless? Could you be the Mentor to this Telemachus? Think of the temptations of a metropolis. Look at the question well, and let me know speedily, for I 've got him as far as this place, and he 's kicking up an awful row in the hotel-yard and rattling his chain like a maniac. Let me know by telegraph at once. SYLVESTER.

P. S. Of course he 's grown a little, and does n't take things always as quietly as he did. He dropped rather heavily on two of Watson's "purps" last week, and snatched old Watson himself, bald-headed, for interfering.

You remember Watson: for an intelligent man, he knows very little of California fauna. How are you fixed for bears on Montgomery Street — I mean in regard to corrals and things? S.

P. P. S. He 's got some new tricks. The boys have been teaching him to put up his hands with them. He slings an ugly left. S.

I am afraid that my desire to possess myself of Baby overcame all other considerations, and I telegraphed an affirmative at once to Sylvester. When I reached my lodgings late that afternoon, my landlady was awaiting me with a telegram. It was two lines from Sylvester: —

All right. Baby goes down on night-boat. Be a father to him. S.

It was due, then, at one o'clock that night. For a moment I was staggered at my own precipitation. I had as yet made no preparations — had said nothing to my landlady about her new guest. I expected to arrange everything in time; and now, through Sylvester's indecent haste, that time had been shortened twelve hours.

Something, however, must be done at once. I turned to Mrs. Brown. I had great reliance in her maternal instincts; I had that still greater reliance, common to our sex, in the general tender-heartedness of pretty women. But I confess I was alarmed. Yet, with a feeble smile, I tried to introduce the subject with classical ease and lightness. I even said, "If Shakespeare's Athenian clown, Mrs. Brown, believed that a lion among ladies was a dreadful thing, what must" — But here I broke down, for Mrs. Brown, with the awful intuition of her sex, I saw at once was more occupied with my manner than my speech. So I tried a business *brusquerie*, and, placing the telegram in

her hand, said hurriedly, "We must do something about this at once. It 's perfectly absurd, but he will be here at one to-night. Beg thousand pardons, but business prevented my speaking before" — and paused, out of breath and courage.

Mrs. Brown read the telegram gravely, lifted her pretty eyebrows, turned the paper over and looked on the other side, and then, in a remote and chilling voice, asked me if she understood me to say that the mother was coming also

"Oh, dear no," I exclaimed, with considerable relief; "the mother is dead, you know. Sylvester — that is my friend, who sent this — shot her when the baby was only three days old" — But the expression of Mrs. Brown's face at this moment was so alarming that I saw that nothing but the fullest explanation would save me. Hastily, and I fear not very coherently, I told her all.

She relaxed sweetly. She said I had frightened her with my talk about lions. Indeed, I think my picture of poor Baby — albeit a trifle highly colored — touched her motherly heart. She was even a little vexed at what she called Sylvester's "hard-heartedness." Still, I was not without some apprehension. It was two months since I had seen him, and Sylvester's vague allusion to his "slinging an ugly left" pained me. I looked at sympathetic little Mrs. Brown, and the thought of Watson's pups covered me with guilty confusion.

Mrs. Brown had agreed to sit up with me until he arrived. One o'clock came, but no Baby. Two o'clock — three o'clock passed. It was almost four when there was a wild clatter of horses' hoofs outside, and with a jerk a wagon stopped at the door. In an instant I had opened it and confronted a stranger. Almost at the same moment the horses attempted to run away with the wagon.

The stranger's appearance was, to say the least, disconcerting. His clothes were badly torn and frayed; his linen

sack hung from his shoulders like a herald's apron; one of his hands was bandaged; his face scratched, and there was no hat on his disheveled head. To add to the general effect, he had evidently sought relief from his woes in drink, and he swayed from side to side as he clung to the door handle, and in a very thick voice stated that he had "suthin'" for me outside. When he had finished the horses made another plunge.

Mrs. Brown thought they must be frightened at something.

"Frightened!" laughed the stranger with bitter irony. "Oh no! Hossish ain't frightened! On'y ran away four timesh comin' here. Oh no! Nobody 's frightened. Everythin' 's all ri'. Ain't it, Bill?" he said, addressing the driver. "On'y been overboard twish; knocked down a hatchway once. Thash nothin'! On'y two men unner doctor's han's at Stockton. Thash nothin'! Six hunner dollarsh cover all dammish."

I was too much disheartened to reply, but moved toward the wagon. The stranger eyed me with an astonishment that almost sobered him.

"Do you reckon to tackle that animile yourself?" he asked, as he surveyed me from head to foot.

I did not speak, but, with an appearance of boldness I was far from feeling, walked to the wagon and called "Baby!"

"All ri'. Cash loosh them straps, Bill, and stan' clear."

The straps were cut loose, and Baby — the remorseless, the terrible — quietly tumbled to the ground, and rolling to my side, rubbed his foolish head against me.

I think the astonishment of the two men was beyond any vocal expression. Without a word the drunken stranger got into the wagon and drove away.

And Baby? He had grown, it is true, a trifle larger; but he was thin, and bore the marks of evident ill usage

His beautiful coat was matted and unkempt, and his claws — those bright steel hooks — had been ruthlessly pared to the quick. His eyes were furtive and restless, and the old expression of stupid good humor had changed to one of intelligent distrust. His intercourse with mankind had evidently quickened his intellect without broadening his moral nature.

I had great difficulty in keeping Mrs. Brown from smothering him in blankets and ruining his digestion with the delicacies of her larder; but I at last got him completely rolled up in the corner of my room and asleep. I lay awake some time later with plans for his future. I finally determined to take him to Oakland, where I had built a little cottage and always spent my Sundays, the very next day. And in the midst of a rosy picture of domestic felicity I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was broad day. My eyes at once sought the corner where Baby had been lying. But he was gone. I sprang from the bed, looked under it, searched the closet, but in vain. The door was still locked; but there were the marks of his blunted claws upon the sill of the window that I had forgotten to close. He had evidently escaped that way — but where? The window opened upon a balcony, to which the only other entrance was through the hall. He must be still in the house.

My hand was already upon the bell-rope, but I stayed it in time. If he had not made himself known, why should I disturb the house? I dressed myself hurriedly and slipped into the hall. The first object that met my eyes was a boot lying upon the stairs. It bore the marks of Baby's teeth, and as I looked along the hall I saw too plainly that the usual array of freshly blackened boots and shoes before the lodgers' doors was not there. As I ascended the stairs I found another, but with the blacking carefully licked off. On the third floor were two or three more

boots slightly mouthed; but at this point Baby's taste for blacking had evidently palled. A little farther on was a ladder leading to an open scuttle. I mounted the ladder, and reached the flat roof that formed a continuous level over the row of houses to the corner of the street. Behind the chimney on the very last roof something was lurking. It was the fugitive Baby. He was covered with dust and dirt and fragments of glass. But he was sitting on his hind legs, and was eating an enormous slab of peanut candy with a look of mingled guilt and infinite satisfaction. He even, I fancied, slightly stroked his stomach with his disengaged fore paw as I approached. He knew that I was looking for him, and the expression of his eyes said plainly, "The past, at least, is secure."

I hurried him, with the evidences of his guilt, back to the scuttle, and descended on tiptoe to the floor beneath. Providence favored us; I met no one on the stairs, and his own cushioned tread was inaudible. I think he was conscious of the dangers of detection, for he even forbore to breathe, or much less chew the last mouthful he had taken; and he skulked at my side, with the syrup dropping from his motionless jaws. I think he would have silently choked to death just then for my sake, and it was not until I had reached my room again, and threw myself panting on the sofa, that I saw how near strangulation he had been. He gulped once or twice, apologetically, and then walked to the corner of his own accord, and rolled himself up like an immense sugar-plum, sweating remorse and treacle at every pore.

I locked him in when I went to breakfast, when I found Mrs. Brown's lodgers in a state of intense excitement over certain mysterious events of the night before, and the dreadful revelations of the morning. It appeared that burglars had entered the block from the scuttles; that, being suddenly alarmed, they had quitted our house with-

out committing any depredation, dropping even the boots they had collected in the halls; but that a desperate attempt had been made to force the till in the confectioner's shop on the corner, and that the glass show-case had been ruthlessly smashed. A courageous servant in No. 4 had seen a masked burglar, on his hands and knees, attempting to enter their scuttle; but on her shouting, "Away wid yees," he instantly fled.

I sat through this recital with cheeks that burned uncomfortably; nor was I the less embarrassed on raising my eyes to meet Mrs. Brown's fixed curiously and mischievously on mine. As soon as I could make my escape from the table I did so, and, running rapidly upstairs, sought refuge from any possible inquiry in my own room. Baby was still asleep in the corner. It would not be safe to remove him until the lodgers had gone down-town, and I was revolving in my mind the expediency of keeping him until night veiled his obtrusive eccentricity from the public eye, when there came a cautious tap at my door. I opened it. Mrs. Brown slipped in quietly, closed the door softly, stood with her back against it and her hand on the knob, and beckoned me mysteriously toward her. Then she asked, in a low voice, —

"Is hair-dye poisonous?"

I was too confounded to speak.

"Oh, do! you know what I mean," she said impatiently. "This stuff." She produced suddenly from behind her a bottle with a Greek label — so long as to run two or three times spirally around it from top to bottom. "He says it isn't a dye; it 's a vegetable preparation, for invigorating" —

"Who says?" I asked despairingly.

"Why, Mr. Parker, of course," said Mrs. Brown severely, with the air of having repeated the name a great many times, — "the old gentleman in the room above. The

simple question I want to ask," she continued, with the calm manner of one who had just convicted another of gross ambiguity of language, is only this: If some of this stuff were put in a saucer and left carelessly on the table, and a child, or a baby, or a cat, or any young animal, should come in at the window and drink it up — a whole saucerful — because it had a sweet taste, would it be likely to hurt them?"

I cast an anxious glance at Baby, sleeping peacefully in the corner, and a very grateful one at Mrs. Brown, and said I didn't think it would.

"Because," said Mrs. Brown loftily, as she opened the door, "I thought if it was poisonous, remedies might be used in time. Because," she added suddenly, abandoning her lofty manner and wildly rushing to the corner, with a frantic embrace of the unconscious Baby, — "because if any nasty stuff should turn its booful hair a horrid green or a naughty pink, it would break his own muzzer's heart, it would!"

But before I could assure Mrs. Brown of the inefficiency of hair-dye as an internal application, she had darted from the room.

That night, with the secrecy of defaulters, Baby and I decamped from Mrs. Brown's. Distrusting the too emotional nature of that noble animal, the horse, I had recourse to a hand-cart, drawn by a stout Irishman, to convey my charge to the ferry. Even then Baby refused to go unless I walked by the cart, and at times rode in it.

"I wish," said Mrs. Brown, as she stood by the door, wrapped in an immense shawl, and saw us depart, — "I wish it looked less solemn — less like a pauper's funeral."

I must admit that, as I walked by the cart that night, I felt very much as if I were accompanying the remains of some humble friend to his last resting-place; and that, when I was obliged to ride in it, I never could entirely convince

myself that I was not helplessly overcome by liquor, or the victim of an accident, *en route* to the hospital. But at last we reached the ferry. On the boat I think no one discovered Baby except a drunken man, who approached me to ask for a light for his cigar, but who suddenly dropped it and fled in dismay to the gentlemen's cabin, where his incoherent ravings were luckily taken for the earlier indications of *delirium tremens*.

It was nearly midnight when I reached my little cottage on the outskirts of Oakland; and it was with a feeling of relief and security that I entered, locked the door, and turned him loose in the hall, satisfied that henceforward his depredations would be limited to my own property. He was very quiet that night, and after he had tried to mount the hat-rack, under the mistaken impression that it was intended for his own gymnastic exercise, and knocked all the hats off, he went peaceably to sleep on the rug.

In a week, with the exercise afforded him by the run of a large, carefully boarded inclosure, he recovered his health, strength, spirits, and much of his former beauty. His presence was unknown to my neighbors, although it was noticeable that horses invariably "shied" in passing to the windward of my house, and that the baker and milkman had great difficulty in the delivery of their wares in the morning, and indulged in unseemly and unnecessary profanity in so doing.

At the end of the week, I determined to invite a few friends to see the Baby, and to that purpose wrote a number of formal invitations. After descanting, at some length, on the great expense and danger attending his capture and training, I offered a programme of the performances of the "Infant Phenomenon of Sierran Solitudes," drawn up into the highest professional profusion of alliteration and capital letters. A few extracts will give the reader some idea of his educational progress: —

1. He will, rolled up in a Round Ball, roll down the Wood Shed, Rapidly, illustrating His manner of Escaping from His Enemy in his Native Wilds.
2. He will Ascend the Well-Pole, and remove from the Very Top a Hat, and as much of the Crown and Brim thereof as May be Permitted.
3. He will perform in a pantomime, descriptive of the Conduct of the Big Bear, The Middle-Sized Bear, and The Little Bear of the Popular Nursery Legend.
4. He will shake his chain Rapidly, showing his Manner of striking Dismay and Terror in the Breasts of Wanderers in Ursine Wildernesses.

The morning of the exhibition came, but an hour before the performance the wretched Baby was missing. The Chinese cook could not indicate his whereabouts. I searched the premises thoroughly, and then, in despair, took my hat and hurried out into the narrow lane that led toward the open fields and the woods beyond. But I found no trace nor track of Baby Sylvester. I returned, after an hour's fruitless search, to find my guests already assembled on the rear veranda. I briefly recounted my disappointment, my probable loss, and begged their assistance.

"Why," said a Spanish friend, who prided himself on his accurate knowledge of English, to Barker, who seemed to be trying vainly to rise from his reclining position on the veranda, — "why do you not disengage yourself from the veranda of our friend? and why, in the name of Heaven do you attach to yourself so much of this thing, and make to yourself such unnecessary contortion? Ah," he continued, suddenly withdrawing one of his own feet from the veranda with an evident effort, "I am myself attached! Surely, it is something here!"

It evidently was. My guests were all rising with difficulty, — the floor of the veranda was covered with some glutinous substance. It was — syrup!

I saw it all in a flash. I ran to the barn; the keg of "golden syrup," purchased only the day before, lay empty upon the floor. There were sticky tracks all over the inclosure, but still no Baby.

"There 's something moving the ground over there by that pile of dirt," said Barker.

He was right; the earth was shaking in one corner of the inclosure like an earthquake. I approached cautiously. I saw, what I had not before noticed, that the ground was thrown up; and there, in the middle of an immense grave-like cavity, crouched Baby Sylvester, still digging, and slowly, but surely, sinking from sight in a mass of dust and clay.

What were his intentions? Whether he was stung by remorse, and wished to hide himself from my reproachful eyes, or whether he was simply trying to dry his syrup-besmeared coat, I never shall know, for that day, alas! was his last with me.

He was pumped upon for two hours, at the end of which time he still yielded a thin treacle. He was then taken and carefully enwrapped in blankets and locked up in the storeroom. The next morning he was gone! The lower portion of the window sash and pane were gone too. His successful experiments on the fragile texture of glass at the confectioner's, on the first day of his entrance to civilization, had not been lost upon him. His first essay at combining cause and effect ended in his escape.

Where he went, where he hid, who captured him if he did not succeed in reaching the foothills beyond Oakland, even the offer of a large reward, backed by the efforts of an intelligent police, could not discover. I never saw him again from that day until —

Did I see him? I was in a horse-car on Sixth Avenue, a few days ago, when the horses suddenly became unmanageable and left the track for the sidewalk, amid the oaths and

execrations of the driver. Immediately in front of the car a crowd had gathered around two performing bears and a showman. One of the animals — thin, emaciated, and the mere wreck of his native strength — attracted my attention. I endeavored to attract his. He turned a pair of bleared, sightless eyes in my direction, but there was no sign of recognition. I leaned from the car window and called softly, "Baby!" But he did not heed. I closed the window. The car was just moving on, when he suddenly turned, and, either by accident or design, thrust a callous paw through the glass.

"It's worth a dollar and a half to put in a new pane," said the conductor, "if folks will play with bears!" —

As I opened Hop Sing's letter there fluttered to the ground a square strip of yellow paper covered with hieroglyphics, which at first glance I innocently took to be the label from a pack of Chinese fire-crackers. But the same envelope also contained a smaller strip of rice paper, with two Chinese characters traced in India ink, that I at once knew to be Hop Sing's visiting card. The whole, as afterwards literally translated, ran as follows: —

To the stranger the gates of my house are not closed; the rice-jar is on the left, and the sweetmeats on the right, as you enter.

Two sayings of the Master:

Hospitality is the virtue of the son and the wisdom of the ancestor.

The superior man is light-hearted after the crop-gathering; he makes a festival.

When the stranger is in your melon patch observe him not too closely; inattention is often the highest form of civility.

Happiness, Peace, and Prosperity. HOP SING.

Admirable, certainly, as was this morality and proverbial wisdom, and although this last axiom was very characteristic of my friend Hop Sing, who was that most sombre of all humorists, a Chinese philosopher, I must confess that, even after a very free translation, I was at a loss to make any immediate application of the message. Luckily I discovered

a third inclosure in the shape of a little note in English and Hop Sing's own commercial hand. It ran thus: —

The pleasure of your company is requested at No. —, Sacramento Street, on Friday evening at eight o'clock. A cup of tea at nine — sharp. HOP SING.

This explained all. It meant a visit to Hop Sing's warehouse, the opening and exhibition of some rare Chinese novelties and curios, a chat in the back office, a cup of tea of a perfection unknown beyond these sacred precincts, cigars, and a visit to the Chinese Theatre or Temple. This was in fact the favorite programme of Hop Sing when he exercised his functions of hospitality as the chief factor or superintendent of the Ning Foo Company.

At eight o'clock on Friday evening I entered the warehouse of Hop Sing. There was that deliciously commingled mysterious foreign odor that I had so often noticed; there was the old array of uncouth-looking objects, the long procession of jars and crockery, the same singular blending of the grotesque and the mathematically neat and exact, the same endless suggestions of frivolity and fragility, the same want of harmony in colors that were each, in themselves, beautiful and rare. Kites in the shape of enormous dragons and gigantic butterflies; kites so ingeniously arranged as to utter at intervals, when facing the wind, the cry of a hawk; kites so large as to be beyond any boy's power of restraint — so large that you understood why kite-flying in China was an amusement for adults; gods of china and bronze so gratuitously ugly as to be beyond any human interest or sympathy from their very impossibility; jars of sweetmeats covered all over with moral sentiments from Confucius; hats that looked like baskets, and baskets that looked like hats; silk so light that I hesitate to record the incredible number of square yards that you might pass through the

ring on your little finger — these and a great many other indescribable objects were all familiar to me. I pushed my way through the dimly lighted warehouse until I reached the back office or parlor, where I found Hop Sing waiting to receive me.

Before I describe him I want the average reader to discharge from his mind any idea of a Chinaman that he may have gathered from the pantomime. He did not wear beautifully scalloped drawers fringed with little bells — I never met a Chinaman who did ; he did not habitually carry his forefinger extended before him at right angles with his body, nor did I ever hear him utter the mysterious sentence, " Ching a ring a ring chaw," nor dance under any provocation. He was, on the whole, a rather grave, decorous, handsome gentleman. His complexion, which extended all over his head except where his long pig-tail grew, was like a very nice piece of glazed brown paper-muslin. His eyes were black and bright, and his eyelids set at an angle of 15° ; his nose straight and delicately formed, his mouth small, and his teeth white and clean. He wore a dark blue silk blouse, and in the streets on cold days a short jacket of Astrakhan fur. He wore also a pair of drawers of blue brocade gathered tightly over his calves and ankles, offering a general sort of suggestion that he had forgotten his trousers that morning, but that, so gentlemanly were his manners, his friends had forborne to mention the fact to him. His manner was urbane, although quite serious. He spoke French and English fluently. In brief, I doubt if you could have found the equal of this Pagan shopkeeper among the Christian traders of San Francisco.

There were a few others present : a Judge of the Federal Court, an editor, a high government official, and a prominent merchant. After we had drunk our tea, and tasted a few sweetmeats from a mysterious jar, that looked as if it might contain a preserved mouse among its other nonde-

script treasures, Hop Sing arose, and gravely beckoning us to follow him, began to descend to the basement. When we got there, we were amazed at finding it brilliantly lighted, and that a number of chairs were arranged in a half-circle on the asphalt pavement. When he had courteously seated us, he said, —

"I have invited you to witness a performance which I can at least promise you no other foreigners but yourselves have ever seen. Wang, the court juggler, arrived here yesterday morning. He has never given a performance outside of the palace before. I have asked him to entertain my friends this evening. He requires no theatre, stage, accessories, or any confederate — nothing more than you see here. Will you be pleased to examine the ground yourselves, gentlemen."

Of course we examined the premises. It was the ordinary basement or cellar of the San Francisco storehouse, cemented to keep out the damp. We poked our sticks into the pavement and rapped on the walls to satisfy our polite host, but for no other purpose. We were quite content to be the victims of any clever deception. For myself, I knew I was ready to be deluded to any extent, and if I had been offered an explanation of what followed, I should have probably declined it.

Although I am satisfied that Wang's general performance was the first of that kind ever given on American soil, it has probably since become so familiar to many of my readers that I shall not bore them with it here. He began by setting to flight, with the aid of his fan, the usual number of butterflies made before our eyes of little bits of tissue-paper, and kept them in the air during the remainder of the performance. I have a vivid recollection of the judge trying to catch one that had lit on his knee, and of its evading him with the pertinacity of a living insect. And even at this time Wang, still plying his fan, was taking chickens

out of hats, making oranges disappear, pulling endless yards of silk from his sleeve, apparently filling the whole area of the basement with goods that appeared mysteriously from the ground, from his own sleeves, from nowhere! He swallowed knives to the ruin of his digestion for years to come; he dislocated every limb of his body; he reclined in the air, apparently upon nothing. But his crowning performance, which I have never yet seen repeated, was the most weird, mysterious, and astounding. It is my apology for this long introduction, my sole excuse for writing this article, the genesis of this veracious history.

He cleared the ground of its encumbering articles for a space of about fifteen feet square, and then invited us all to walk forward and again examine it. We did so gravely; there was nothing but the cemented pavement below to be seen or felt. He then asked for the loan of a handkerchief, and, as I chanced to be nearest him, I offered mine. He took it and spread it open upon the floor. Over this he spread a large square of silk, and over this again a large shawl nearly covering the space he had cleared. He then took a position at one of the points of this rectangle, and began a monotonous chant, rocking his body to and fro in time with the somewhat lugubrious air.

We sat still and waited. Above the chant we could hear the striking of the city clocks, and the occasional rattle of a cart in the street overhead. The absolute watchfulness and expectation, the dim, mysterious half-light of the cellar, falling in a gruesome way upon the misshapen bulk of a Chinese deity in the background, a faint smell of opium smoke mingling with spice, and the dreadful uncertainty of what we were really waiting for, sent an uncomfortable thrill down our backs, and made us look at each other with a forced and unnatural smile. This feeling was heightened when Hop Sing slowly rose, and, without a word, pointed with his finger to the centre of the shawl.

There was something beneath the shawl! Surely — and something that was not there before. At first a mere suggestion in relief, a faint outline, but growing more and more distinct and visible every moment. The chant still continued, the perspiration began to roll from the singer's face, gradually the hidden object took upon itself a shape and bulk that raised the shawl in its centre some five or six inches. It was now unmistakably the outline of a small but perfect human figure, with extended arms and legs. One or two of us turned pale; there was a feeling of general uneasiness, until the editor broke the silence by a gibe that, poor as it was, was received with spontaneous enthusiasm. Then the chant suddenly ceased, Wang arose, and, with a quick, dexterous movement, stripped both shawl and silk away, and discovered, sleeping peacefully upon my handkerchief, a tiny Chinese baby!

The applause and uproar which followed this revelation ought to have satisfied Wang, even if his audience was a small one; it was loud enough to awaken the baby — a pretty little boy about a year old, looking like a Cupid cut out of sandalwood. He was whisked away almost as mysteriously as he appeared. When Hop Sing returned my handkerchief to me with a bow, I asked if the juggler was the father of the baby. "No sabe!" said the imperturbable Hop Sing, taking refuge in that Spanish form of noncommittalism so common in California.

"But does he have a new baby for every performance?" I asked.

"Perhaps; who knows?"

"But what will become of this one?"

"Whatever you choose, gentlemen," replied Hop Sing, with a courteous inclination; "it was born here — you are its godfathers."

There were two characteristic peculiarities of any Californian assemblage in 1856: it was quick to take a hint,

and generous to the point of prodigality in its response to any charitable appeal. No matter how sordid or avaricious the individual, he could not resist the infection of sympathy. I doubled the points of my handkerchief into a bag, dropped a coin into it, and, without a word, passed it to the judge. He quietly added a twenty-dollar gold-piece, and passed it to the next; when it was returned to me it contained over a hundred dollars. I knotted the money in the handkerchief, and gave it to Hop Sing.

"For the baby, from its godfathers."

"But what name?" said the judge. There was a running fire of "Erebus," "Nox," "Plutus," "Terra Cotta," "Antæus," etc., etc. Finally the question was referred to our host.

"Why not keep his own name," he said quietly, — "Wan Lee?" And he did.

And thus was Wan Lee, on the night of Friday the 5th of March, 1856, born into this veracious chronicle.

The last form of the "Northern Star" for the 19th of July, 1865, — the only daily paper published in Klamath County, — had just gone to press, and at three A. M. I was putting aside my proofs and manuscripts, preparatory to going home, when I discovered a letter lying under some sheets of paper which I must have overlooked. The envelope was considerably soiled, it had no postmark, but I had no difficulty in recognizing the hand of my friend Hop Sing. I opened it hurriedly, and read as follows: —

My dear Sir, — I do not know whether the bearer will suit you, but unless the office of "devil" in your newspaper is a purely technical one, I think he has all the qualities required. He is very quick, active, and intelligent; understands English better than he speaks it, and makes up for any defect by his habits of observation and

imitation. You have only to show him how to do a thing once, and he will repeat it, whether it is an offense or a virtue. But you certainly know him already; you are one of his godfathers, for is he not Wan Lee, the reputed son of Wang the conjurer, to whose performances I had the honor to introduce you? But perhaps you have forgotten it.

I shall send him with a gang of coolies to Stockton, thence by express to your town. If you can use him there, you will do me a favor, and probably save his life, which is at present in great peril from the hands of the younger members of your Christian and highly civilized race who attend the enlightened schools in San Francisco.

He has acquired some singular habits and customs from his experience of Wang's profession, which he followed for some years, until he became too large to go in a hat, or be produced from his father's sleeve. The money you left with me has been expended on his education; he has gone through the Tri-literal Classics, but, I think, without much benefit. He knows but little of Confucius, and absolutely nothing of Mencius. Owing to the negligence of his father, he associated, perhaps, too much with American children.

I should have answered your letter before, by post, but I thought that Wan Lee himself would be a better messenger for this. Yours respectfully,

HOP SING.

And this was the long-delayed answer to my letter to Hop Sing. But where was "the bearer"? How was the letter delivered? I summoned hastily the foreman, printers, and office boy, but without eliciting anything; no one had seen the letter delivered, nor knew anything of the bearer. A few days later I had a visit from my laundryman, Ah Ri.

"You wantee debbil? All lightee; me catchee him."

He returned in a few moments with a bright-looking Chinese boy, about ten years old, with whose appearance and general intelligence I was so greatly impressed that I engaged him on the spot. When the business was concluded, I asked his name.

"Wan Lee," said the boy.

"What! Are you the boy sent out by Hop Sing? What the devil do you mean by not coming here before, and how did you deliver that letter?"

Wan Lee looked at me and laughed. "Me pitchee in top side window."

I did not understand. He looked for a moment perplexed, and then, snatching the letter out of my hand, ran down the stairs. After a moment's pause, to my great astonishment, the letter came flying in at the window, circled twice around the room, and then dropped gently like a bird upon my table. Before I had got over my surprise Wan Lee reappeared, smiled, looked at the letter and then at me, said, "So, John," and then remained gravely silent. I said nothing further, but it was understood that this was his first official act.

His next performance, I grieve to say, was not attended with equal success. One of our regular paper-carriers fell sick, and, at a pinch, Wan Lee was ordered to fill his place. To prevent mistakes he was shown over the route the previous evening, and supplied at about daylight with the usual number of subscribers' copies. He returned after an hour, in good spirits and without the papers. He had delivered them all he said.

Unfortunately for Wan Lee, at about eight o'clock indignant subscribers began to arrive at the office. They had received their copies; but how? In the form of hard-pressed cannon-balls, delivered by a single shot and a mere *tour de force* through the glass of bedroom windows. They had received them full in the face, like a baseball,

if they happened to be up and stirring; they had received them in quarter sheets, tucked in at separate windows; they had found them in the chimney, pinned against the door, shot through attic windows, delivered in long slips through convenient keyholes, stuffed into ventilators, and occupying the same can with the morning's milk. One subscriber, who waited for some time at the office door, to have a personal interview with Wan Lee (then comfortably locked in my bedroom), told me, with tears of rage in his eyes, that he had been awakened at five o'clock by a most hideous yelling below his windows; that on rising, in great agitation, he was startled by the sudden appearance of the "Northern Star," rolled hard and bent into the form of a boomerang or East Indian club, that sailed into the window, described a number of fiendish circles in the room, knocked over the light, slapped the baby's face, "took" him (the subscriber) "in the jaw," and then returned out of the window, and dropped helplessly in the area. During the rest of the day wads and strips of soiled paper, purporting to be copies of the "Northern Star" of that morning's issue, were brought indignantly to the office. An admirable editorial on "The Resources of Humboldt County," which I had constructed the evening before, and which, I have reason to believe, might have changed the whole balance of trade during the ensuing year, and left San Francisco bankrupt at her wharves, was in this way lost to the public.

It was deemed advisable for the next three weeks to keep Wan Lee closely confined to the printing-office and the purely mechanical part of the business. Here he developed a surprising quickness and adaptability, winning even the favor and good will of the printers and foreman, who at first looked upon his introduction into the secrets of their trade as fraught with the gravest political significance. He learned to set type readily and neatly, his wonderful skill in manipulation aiding him in the mere mechanical

act, and his ignorance of the language confining him simply to the mechanical effort — confirming the printer's axiom that the printer who considers or follows the ideas of his copy makes a poor compositor. He would set up deliberately long diatribes against himself, composed by his fellow printers, and hung on his hook as copy, and even such short sentences as "Wan Lee is the devil's own imp," "Wan Lee is a Mongolian rascal," and bring the proof to me with happiness beaming from every tooth and satisfaction shining in his huckleberry eyes.

It was not long, however, before he learned to retaliate on his mischievous persecutors. I remember one instance in which his reprisal came very near involving me in a serious misunderstanding. Our foreman's name was Webster, and Wan Lee presently learned to know and recognize the individual and combined letters of his name. It was during a political campaign, and the eloquent and fiery Colonel Starbottle of Siskiyou had delivered an effective speech, which was reported especially for the "Northern Star." In a very sublime peroration Colonel Starbottle had said, "In the language of the godlike Webster, I repeat" — and here followed the quotation, which I have forgotten. Now, it chanced that Wan Lee, looking over the galley after it had been revised, saw the name of his chief persecutor, and, of course, imagined the quotation his. After the form was locked up, Wan Lee took advantage of Webster's absence to remove the quotation, and substitute a thin piece of lead, of the same size as the type, engraved with Chinese characters, making a sentence which, I had reason to believe, was an utter and abject confession of the incapacity and offensiveness of the Webster family generally, and exceedingly eulogistic of Wan Lee himself personally.

The next morning's paper contained Colonel Starbottle's speech in full, in which it appeared that the "godlike"

Webster had on one occasion uttered his thoughts in excellent but perfectly enigmatical Chinese. The rage of Colonel Starbottle knew no bounds. I have a vivid recollection of that admirable man walking into my office and demanding a retraction of the statement.

"But, my dear sir," I asked, "are you willing to deny, over your own signature, that Webster ever uttered such a sentence? Dare you deny that, with Mr. Webster's well-known attainments, a knowledge of Chinese might not have been among the number? Are you willing to submit a translation suitable to the capacity of our readers, and deny, upon your honor as a gentleman, that the late Mr. Webster ever uttered such a sentiment? If you are, sir, I am willing to publish your denial."

The Colonel was not, and left, highly indignant.

Webster, the foreman, took it more coolly. Happily he was unaware that for two days after, Chinamen from the laundries, from the gulches, from the kitchens, looked in the front office door with faces beaming with sardonic delight; that three hundred extra copies of the "Star" were ordered for the wash-houses on the river. He only knew that during the day Wan Lee occasionally went off into convulsive spasms, and that he was obliged to kick him into consciousness again. A week after the occurrence I called Wan Lee into my office.

"Wan," I said gravely, "I should like you to give me, for my own personal satisfaction, a translation of that Chinese sentence which my gifted countryman, the late godlike Webster, uttered upon a public occasion." Wan Lee looked at me intently, and then the slightest possible twinkle crept into his black eyes. Then he replied, with equal gravity, —

"Mishtel Webstel, — he say: 'China boy makee me belly much foolee. China boy makee me heap sick.'" Which I have reason to think was true.

But I fear I am giving but one side, and not the best, of Wan Lee's character. As he imparted it to me, his had been a hard life. He had known scarcely any childhood — he had no recollection of a father or mother. The conjurer Wang had brought him up. He had spent the first seven years of his life in appearing from baskets, in dropping out of hats, in climbing ladders, in putting his little limbs out of joint in posturing. He had lived in an atmosphere of trickery and deception; he had learned to look upon mankind as dupes of their senses; in fine, if he had thought at all, he would have been a skeptic; if he had been a little older, he would have been a cynic; if he had been older still, he would have been a philosopher. As it was, he was a little imp! A good-natured imp it was, too, — an imp whose moral nature had never been awakened, an imp up for a holiday, and willing to try virtue as a diversion. I don't know that he had any spiritual nature; he was very superstitious; he carried about with him a hideous little porcelain god, which he was in the habit of alternately reviling and propitiating. He was too intelligent for the commoner Chinese vices of stealing or gratuitous lying. Whatever discipline he practiced was taught by his intellect.

I am inclined to think that his feelings were not altogether unimpressible, — although it was almost impossible to extract an expression from him, — and I conscientiously believe he became attached to those that were good to him. What he might have become under more favorable conditions than the bondsman of an overworked, underpaid literary man, I don't know; I only know that the scant, irregular, impulsive kindnesses that I showed him were gratefully received. He was very loyal and patient — two qualities rare in the average American servant. He was like Malvolio, "sad and civil" with me; only once, and then under great provocation, do I remember of his exhibit-

ing any impatience. It was my habit, after leaving the office at night, to take him with me to my rooms, as the bearer of any supplemental or happy afterthought in the editorial way, that might occur to me before the paper went to press. One night I had been scribbling away past the usual hour of dismissing Wan Lee, and had become quite oblivious of his presence in a chair near my door, when suddenly I became aware of a voice saying, in plaintive accents, something that sounded like "Chy Lee."

I faced around sternly.

"What did you say?"

"Me say, 'Chy Lee.'"

"Well?" I said impatiently.

"You sabe, 'How do, John'?"

"Yes."

"You sabe, 'So long, John'?"

"Yes."

"Well, 'Chy Lee' allee same!"

I understood him quite plainly. It appeared that "Chy Lee" was a form of "good-night," and that Wan Lee was anxious to go home. But an instinct of mischief which I fear I possessed in common with him, impelled me to act as if oblivious of the hint. I muttered something about not understanding him, and again bent over my work. In a few minutes I heard his wooden shoes pattering pathetically over the floor. I looked up. He was standing near the door.

"You no sabe, 'Chy Lee'?"

"No," I said sternly.

"You sabe muchee big foolee! — allee same!"

And with this audacity upon his lips he fled. The next morning, however, he was as meek and patient as before, and I did not recall his offense. As a probable peace-offering, he blacked all my boots, — a duty never required of him, — including a pair of buff deerskin slippers and

an immense pair of horseman's jack-boots, on which he indulged his remorse for two hours.

I have spoken of his honesty as being a quality of his intellect rather than his principle, but I recall about this time two exceptions to the rule. I was anxious to get some fresh eggs, as a change to the heavy diet of a mining town, and knowing that Wan Lee's countrymen were great poultry-raisers, I applied to him. He furnished me with them regularly every morning, but refused to take any pay, saying that the man did not sell them, — a remarkable instance of self-abnegation, as eggs were then worth half a dollar apiece. One morning, my neighbor, Foster, dropped in upon me at breakfast, and took occasion to bewail his own ill fortune, as his hens had lately stopped laying, or wandered off in the bush. Wan Lee, who was present during our colloquy, preserved his characteristic sad taciturnity. When my neighbor had gone, he turned to me with a slight chuckle — "Flostel's hens — Wan Lee's hens — allee same!" His other offense was more serious and ambitious. It was a season of great irregularities in the mails, and Wan Lee had heard me deplore the delay in the delivery of my letters and newspapers. On arriving at my office one day, I was amazed to find my table covered with letters, evidently just from the post-office, but unfortunately not one addressed to me. I turned to Wan Lee, who was surveying them with a calm satisfaction, and demanded an explanation. To my horror he pointed to an empty mail-bag in the corner, and said, "Postman he say, 'No lettee, John — no lettee, John.' Postman plentee lie! Postman no good. Me catchee lettee last night — allee same!" Luckily it was still early; the mails had not been distributed; I had a hurried interview with the postmaster, and Wan Lee's bold attempt at robbing the U. S. Mail was finally condoned, by the purchase of a new mail-bag, and the whole affair thus kept a secret.

If my liking for my little pagan page had not been sufficient, my duty to Hop Sing was enough to cause me to take Wan Lee with me when I returned to San Francisco, after my two years' experience with the "Northern Star." I do not think he contemplated the change with pleasure. I attributed his feelings to a nervous dread of crowded public streets — when he had to go across town for me on an errand, he always made a long circuit of the outskirts; to his dislike for the discipline of the Chinese and English school to which I proposed to send him; to his fondness for the free, vagrant life of the mines; to sheer willfulness! That it might have been a superstitious premonition did not occur to me until long after.

Nevertheless it really seemed as if the opportunity I had long looked for and confidently expected had come, — the opportunity of placing Wan Lee under gently restraining influences, of subjecting him to a life and experience that would draw out of him what good my superficial care and ill-regulated kindness could not reach. Wan Lee was placed at the school of a Chinese missionary, — an intelligent and kind-hearted clergyman, who had shown great interest in the boy, and who, better than all, had a wonderful faith in him. A home was found for him in the family of a widow, who had a bright and interesting daughter about two years younger than Wan Lee. It was this bright, cheery, innocent, and artless child that touched and reached a depth in the boy's nature that hitherto had been unsuspected — that awakened a moral susceptibility which had lain for years insensible alike to the teachings of society or the ethics of the theologian.

These few brief months, bright with a promise that we never saw fulfilled, must have been happy ones to Wan Lee. He worshiped his little friend with something of the same superstition, but without any of the caprice, that he bestowed upon his porcelain Pagan god. It was his delight to walk

behind her to school, carrying her books, — a service always fraught with danger to him from the little hands of his Caucasian Christian brothers. He made her the most marvelous toys; he would cut out of carrots and turnips the most astonishing roses and tulips; he made lifelike chickens out of melon-seeds; he constructed fans and kites, and was singularly proficient in the making of dolls' paper dresses. On the other hand she played and sang to him; taught him a thousand little prettinesses and refinements only known to girls; gave him a yellow ribbon for his pigtail, as best suiting his complexion; read to him; showed him wherein he was original and valuable; took him to Sunday-school with her, against the precedents of the school, and, small-womanlike, triumphed. I wish I could add here, that she effected his conversion, and made him give up his porcelain idol, but I am telling a true story, and this little girl was quite content to fill him with her own Christian goodness, without letting him know that he was changed. So they got along very well together — this little Christian girl, with her shining cross hanging around her plump, white, little neck, and this dark little Pagan, with his hideous porcelain god hidden away in his blouse.

There were two days of that eventful year which will long be remembered in San Francisco, — two days when a mob of her citizens set upon and killed unarmed, defenseless foreigners, because they were foreigners and of another race, religion, and color, and worked for what wages they could get. There were some public men so timid that, seeing this, they thought that the end of the world had come; there were some eminent statesmen, whose names I am ashamed to write here, who began to think that the passage in the Constitution which guarantees civil and religious liberty to every citizen or foreigner was a mistake. But there were also some men who were not so easily frightened, and in twenty-four hours we had

things so arranged that the timid men could wring their hands in safety, and the eminent statesmen utter their doubts without hurting anybody or anything. And in the midst of this I got a note from Hop Sing, asking me to come to him immediately.

I found his warehouse closed and strongly guarded by the police against any possible attack of the rioters. Hop Sing admitted me through a barred grating with his usual imperturbable calm, but, as it seemed to me, with more than his usual seriousness. Without a word he took my hand and led me to the rear of the room, and thence downstairs into the basement. It was dimly lighted, but there was something lying on the floor covered by a shawl. As I approached, he drew the shawl away with a sudden gesture, and revealed Wan Lee, the Pagan, lying there dead!

Dead, my reverend friends, dead! Stoned to death in the streets of San Francisco, in the year of grace, eighteen hundred and sixty-nine, by a mob of half-grown boys and Christian school-children!

As I put my hand reverently upon his breast, I felt something crumbling beneath his blouse. I looked inquiringly at Hop Sing. He put his hand between the folds of silk, and drew out something with the first bitter smile I had ever seen on the face of that Pagan gentleman.

It was Wan Lee's porcelain god, crushed by a stone from the hands of those Christian iconoclasts!

AN HEIRESS OF RED DOG

THE first intimation given of the eccentricity of the testator was, I think, in the spring of 1854. He was at that time in possession of a considerable property, heavily mortgaged to one friend, and a wife of some attraction, on whose affections another friend held an encumbering lien. One day it was found that he had secretly dug, or caused to be dug, a deep trap before the front door of his dwelling, into which a few friends, in the course of the evening, casually and familiarly dropped. This circumstance, slight in itself, seemed to point to the existence of a certain humor in the man, which might eventually get into literature, although his wife's lover — a man of quick discernment, whose leg was broken by the fall — took other views. It was some weeks later that, while dining with certain other friends of his wife, he excused himself from the table to quietly reappear at the front window with a three-quarter-inch hydraulic pipe, and a stream of water projected at the assembled company. An attempt was made to take public cognizance of this, but a majority of the citizens of Red Dog who were not at the dinner decided that a man had a right to choose his own methods of diverting his company. Nevertheless, there were some hints of his insanity; his wife recalled other acts clearly attributable to *dementia;* the crippled lover argued from his own experience that the integrity of her limbs could only be secured by leaving her husband's house; and the mortgagee, fearing a further damage to his property, foreclosed. But here the cause of all this anxiety took matters into his own hands, and disappeared.

When we next heard from him, he had, in some mysterious way, been relieved alike of his wife and property, and was living alone at Rockville, fifty miles away, and editing a newspaper. But that originality he had displayed when dealing with the problems of his own private life, when applied to politics in the columns of the "Rockville Vanguard" was singularly unsuccessful. An amusing exaggeration, purporting to be an exact account of the manner in which the opposing candidate had murdered his Chinese laundryman, was, I regret to say, answered only by assault and battery. A gratuitous and purely imaginative description of a great religious revival in Calaveras, in which the sheriff of the county — a notoriously profane skeptic — was alleged to have been the chief exhorter, resulted only in the withdrawal of the county advertising from the paper. In the midst of this practical confusion he suddenly died. It was then discovered, as a crowning proof of his absurdity, that he had left a will, bequeathing his entire effects to a freckle-faced maid servant at the Rockville Hotel. But that absurdity became serious when it was also discovered that among these effects were a thousand shares in the Rising Sun Mining Co., which, a day or two after his demise, and while people were still laughing at his grotesque benefaction, suddenly sprang into opulence and celebrity. Three millions of dollars was roughly estimated as the value of the estate thus wantonly sacrificed! For it is only fair to state, as a just tribute to the enterprise and energy of that young and thriving settlement, that there was not probably a single citizen who did not feel himself better able to control the deceased humorist's property. Some had expressed a doubt of their ability to support a family; others had felt perhaps too keenly the deep responsibility resting upon them when chosen from the panel as jurors, and had evaded their public duties; a few had declined office and a low salary; but no one shrank from the possibility of having been called upon to assume the functions of Peggy Moffat — the heiress.

The will was contested. First by the widow, who, it now appeared, had never been legally divorced from the deceased; next by four of his cousins, who awoke, only too late, to a consciousness of his moral and pecuniary worth. But the humble legatee — a singularly plain, unpretending, uneducated Western girl — exhibited a dogged pertinacity in claiming her rights. She rejected all compromises. A rough sense of justice in the community, while doubting her ability to take care of the whole fortune, suggested that she ought to be content with three hundred thousand dollars. "She 's bound to throw even *that* away on some derned skunk of a man, natoorally; but three millions is too much to give a chap for makin' her onhappy. It 's offering a temptation to cussedness." The only opposing voice to this counsel came from the sardonic lips of Mr. Jack Hamlin. "Suppose," suggested that gentleman, turning abruptly on the speaker, — "suppose, when you won twenty thousand dollars of me last Friday night — suppose that instead of handing you over the money as I did — suppose I 'd got up on my hind legs and said, 'Look yer, Bill Wethersbee, you 're a damned fool. If I give ye that twenty thousand you 'll throw it away in the first skin game in 'Frisco, and hand it over to the first short card-sharp you 'll meet. There 's a thousand — enough for you to fling away — take it and get!' Suppose what I 'd said to you was the frozen truth, and you 'd know'd it — would that have been the square thing to play on you?" But here Wethersbee quickly pointed out the inefficiency of the comparison by stating that *he* had won the money fairly with a *stake*. "And how do you know," demanded Hamlin savagely, bending his black eyes on the astounded casuist, — "how do you know that the gal hez n't put down a stake?" The man stammered an unintelligible reply. The gambler laid his white hand on Wethersbee's shoulder. "Look yer, old man," he said, "every gal stakes her *whole* pile — you

can bet your life on that — whatever 's her little game. If she took to keerds instead of her feelings — if she 'd put up 'chips' instead o' body and soul, she 'd bust every bank 'twixt this and 'Frisco! You hear me?"

Somewhat of this idea was conveyed, I fear not quite as sentimentally, to Peggy Moffat herself. The best legal wisdom of San Francisco retained by the widow and relatives took occasion, in a private interview with Peggy, to point out that she stood in the quasi-criminal attitude of having unlawfully practiced upon the affections of an insane elderly gentleman, with a view of getting possession of his property, and suggested to her that no vestige of her moral character would remain after the trial — if she persisted in forcing her claims to that issue. It is said that Peggy, on hearing this, stopped washing the plate she had in her hands, and, twisting the towel around her fingers, fixed her small pale blue eyes at the lawyer.

"And ez that the kind o' chirpin' the critters keep up?"

"I regret to say, my dear young lady," responded the lawyer, "that the world is censorious. I must add," he continued, with engaging frankness, "that we professional lawyers are apt to study the opinion of the world — and that such will be the theory of — our side."

"Then," said Peggy stoutly, "ez I allow I 've got to go into court to defend my character, I might as well pack in them three millions too."

There is hearsay evidence that Peg added to this speech a wish and desire to "bust the crust" of her traducers, and, remarking that "that was the kind of hairpin" she was, closed the conversation with an unfortunate accident to the plate, that left a severe contusion on the legal brow of her companion. But this story, popular in the bar-rooms and gulches, lacked confirmation in higher circles. Better authenticated was the legend related of an interview with her

own lawyer. That gentleman had pointed out to her the advantage of being able to show some reasonable cause for the singular generosity of the testator.

"Although," he continued, "the law does not go back of the will for reason or cause for its provisions, it would be a strong point with the judge and jury — particularly if the theory of insanity were set up — for us to show that the act was logical and natural. Of course you have — I speak confidentially, Miss Moffat — certain ideas of your own why the late Mr. Byways was so singularly generous to you."

"No, I have n't," said Peg decidedly.

"Think again. Had he not expressed to you — you understand that this is confidential between us, although I protest, my dear young lady, that I see no reason why it should not be made public — had he not given utterance to sentiments of a nature consistent with some future matrimonial relations?" But here Miss Peg's large mouth, which had been slowly relaxing over her irregular teeth, stopped him.

"If you mean he wanted to marry me — no!"

"I see. But were there any conditions — of course you know the law takes no cognizance of any not expressed in the will; but still, for the sake of mere corroboration of the bequest — do you know of any conditions on which he gave you the property?"

"You mean, did he want anything in return?"

"Exactly, my dear young lady."

Peg's face on one side turned a deep magenta color, on the other a lighter cherry, while her nose was purple, and her forehead an Indian red. To add to the effect of this awkward and discomposing dramatic exhibition of embarrassment, she began to wipe her hands on her dress, and sat silent.

"I understand," said the lawyer hastily. "No matter — the conditions *were* fulfilled."

"No," said Peg amazedly; "how could they be until he was dead?"

It was the lawyer's turn to color and grow embarrassed.

"He *did* say something, and make some conditions," continued Peg, with a certain firmness through her awkwardness; "but that 's nobody's business but mine and his'n. And it 's no call o' yours or theirs."

"But, my dear Miss Moffat, if these very conditions were proofs of his right mind, you surely would not object to make them known, if only to enable you to put yourself in a condition to carry them out."

"But," said Peg cunningly, "'spose you and the Court did n't think 'em satisfactory? 'Spose you thought 'em *queer?* Eh?"

With this helpless limitation on the part of the defense, the case came to trial. Everybody remembers it: how for six weeks it was the daily food of Calaveras County; how for six weeks the intellectual and moral and spiritual competency of Mr. James Byways to dispose of his property was discussed with learned and formal obscurity in the Court, and with unlettered and independent prejudice by camp-fires and in bar-rooms. At the end of that time, when it was logically established that at least nine tenths of the population of Calaveras were harmless lunatics, and everybody else's reason seemed to totter on its throne, an exhausted jury succumbed one day to the presence of Peg in the court-room. It was not a prepossessing presence at any time; but the excitement, and an injudicious attempt to ornament herself, brought her defects into a glaring relief that was almost unreal. Every freckle on her face stood out and asserted itself singly; her pale blue eyes, that gave no indication of her force of character, were weak and wandering, or stared blankly at the judge; her over-sized head, broad at the base, terminating in the scantiest possible light-colored braid in the middle of her narrow shoul-

ders, was as hard and uninteresting as the wooden spheres that topped the railing against which she sat. The jury, who for six weeks had had her described to them by the plaintiffs as an arch, wily enchantress, who had sapped the failing reason of Jim Byways, revolted to a man. There was something so appallingly gratuitous in her plainness, that it was felt that three millions was scarcely a compensation for it. "Ef that money was give to her, she earned it *sure*, boys; it was n't no softness of the old man," said the foreman. When the jury retired, it was felt that she had cleared her character. When they reëntered the room with their verdict, it was known that she had been awarded three millions damages for its defamation.

She got the money. But those who had confidently expected to see her squander it were disappointed. On the contrary, it was presently whispered that she was exceedingly penurious. That admirable woman, Mrs. Stiver of Red Dog, who accompanied her to San Francisco to assist her in making purchases, was loud in her indignation. "She cares more for two bits[1] than I do for five dollars. She would n't buy anything at the 'City of Paris' because it was 'too expensive,' and at last rigged herself out, a perfect guy, at some cheap slop-shops in Market Street. And after all the care Jane and me took of her, giving up our time and experience to her, she never so much as made Jane a single present." Popular opinion, which regarded Mrs Stiver's attention as purely speculative, was not shocked at this unprofitable dénouement; but when Peg refused to give anything to clear the mortgage off the Presbyterian Church, and even declined to take shares in the Union Ditch, considered by many as an equally sacred and safe investment, she began to lose favor. Nevertheless, she seemed to be as regardless of public opinion as she had been before the trial; took a small house, in which she lived with an old

[1] That is, twenty-five cents.

woman, who had once been a fellow servant, on, apparently, terms of perfect equality, and looked after her money. I wish I could say that she did this discreetly, but the fact is, she blundered. The same dogged persistency she had displayed in claiming her rights was visible in her unsuccessful ventures. She sunk two hundred thousand dollars in a worn-out shaft originally projected by the deceased testator. She prolonged the miserable existence of the "Rockville Vanguard" long after it had ceased to interest even its enemies; she kept the doors of the Rockville Hotel open when its custom had departed; she lost the coöperation and favor of a fellow capitalist through a trifling misunderstanding in which she was derelict and impenitent; she had three lawsuits on her hands that could have been settled for a trifle. I note these defects to show that she was by no means a heroine. I quote her affair with Jack Folinsbee to show that she was scarcely the average woman.

That handsome, graceless vagabond had struck the outskirts of Red Dog in a cyclone of dissipation, which left him a stranded but still rather interesting wreck in a ruinous cabin not far from Peg Moffat's virgin bower. Pale, crippled from excesses, with a voice quite tremulous from sympathetic emotion more or less developed by stimulants, he lingered languidly, with much time on his hands, and only a few neighbors. In this fascinating kind of general deshabille of morals, dress, and the emotions, he appeared before Peg Moffat. More than that, he occasionally limped with her through the settlement. The critical eye of Red Dog took in the singular pair, — Jack, voluble, suffering, apparently overcome by remorse, conscience, vituperation, and disease; and Peg, open-mouthed, high-colored, awkward, yet delighted; and the critical eye of Red Dog, seeing this, winked meaningly at Rockville. No one knew what passed between them. But all observed that one summer day Jack

drove down the main street of Red Dog in an open buggy, with the heiress of that town beside him. Jack, albeit a trifle shaky, held the reins with something of his old dash; and Mistress Peggy, in an enormous bonnet with pearl-colored ribbons, a shade darker than her hair, holding in her short pink-gloved fingers a bouquet of yellow roses, absolutely glowed crimson in distressful gratification over the dashboard. So these two fared on — out of the busy settlement, into the woods, against the rosy sunset. Possibly it was not a pretty picture; nevertheless, as the dim aisles of the solemn pines opened to receive them, miners leaned upon their spades, and mechanics stopped in their toil to look after them. The critical eye of Red Dog, perhaps from the sun, perhaps from the fact that it had itself once been young and dissipated, took on a kindly moisture as it gazed.

The moon was high when they returned. Those who had waited to congratulate Jack on this near prospect of a favorable change in his fortunes were chagrined to find that, having seen the lady safe home, he had himself departed from Red Dog. Nothing was to be gained from Peg, who, on the next day and ensuing days, kept the even tenor of her way, sunk a thousand or two more in unsuccessful speculation, and made no change in her habits of personal economy. Weeks passed without any apparent sequel to this romantic idyl. Nothing was known definitely until Jack, a month later, turned up in Sacramento, with a billiard-cue in his hand, and a heart overcharged with indignant emotion. "I don't mind saying to you gentlemen, in confidence," said Jack, to a circle of sympathizing players, — "I don't mind telling you regarding this thing, that I was as soft on that freckled-faced, red-eyed, tallow-haired gal as if she 'd been — a — a — an actress. And I don't mind saying, gentlemen, that, as far as I understand women, she was just as soft on me! You kin laugh, but

it 's so. One day I took her out buggy-riding, — in style, too, — and out on the road I offered to do the square thing — just as if she 'd been a lady — offered to marry her then and there! And what did she do?" said Jack with an hysterical laugh. "Why, blank it all! *offered me twenty-five dollars a week allowance — pay to be stopped when I was n't at home!*" The roar of laughter that greeted this frank confession was broken by a quiet voice asking, "And what did *you* say?" "Say?" screamed Jack. "I just told her to — with her money." "They say," continued the quiet voice, "that you asked her for the loan of two hundred and fifty dollars to get you to Sacramento — and that you got it." "Who says so?" roared Jack; "show me the blank liar." There was a dead silence. Then the possessor of the quiet voice, Mr. Jack Hamlin, languidly reached under the table, took the chalk, and rubbing the end of his billiard-cue, began with gentle gravity: "It was an old friend of mine in Sacramento, — a man with a wooden leg, a game eye, three fingers on his right hand, and a consumptive cough. Being unable naturally to back himself, he leaves things to me. So for the sake of argument," continued Hamlin, suddenly laying down his cue, and fixing his wicked black eyes on the speaker, "say it 's *me!*"

I am afraid that this story, whether truthful or not, did not tend to increase Peg's popularity in a community where recklessness or generosity condoned for the absence of all the other virtues; and it is possible also that Red Dog was no more free from prejudice than other more civilized but equally disappointed match-makers. Likewise, during the following years, she made several more foolish ventures, and lost heavily. In fact, a feverish desire to increase her store at almost any risk seemed to possess her. At last it was announced that she intended to reopen the infelix Rockville Hotel, and keep it herself. Wild as this scheme appeared in theory, when put into practical operation there

seemed to be some chance of success. Much, doubtless, was owing to her practical knowledge of hotel-keeping, but more to her rigid economy and untiring industry. The mistress of millions, she cooked, washed, waited on table, made the beds, and labored like a common menial. Visitors were attracted by this novel spectacle. The income of the house increased as their respect for the hostess lessened. No anecdote of her avarice was too extravagant for current belief. It was even alleged that she had been known to carry the luggage of guests to their rooms, that she might anticipate the usual porter's gratuity. She denied herself the ordinary necessaries of life. She was poorly clad, she was ill fed — but the hotel was making money.

A few hinted at insanity ; others shook their heads, and said a curse was entailed on the property. It was believed also, from her appearance, that she could not long survive this tax on her energies, and already there was discussion as to the probable final disposition of her property. It was the particular fortune of Mr. Jack Hamlin to be able to set the world right on this and other questions regarding her.

A stormy December evening had set in when he chanced to be a guest of the Rockville Hotel. He had during the past week been engaged in the prosecution of his noble profession at Red Dog, and had, in the graphic language of a coadjutor, "cleared out the town, except his fare in the pockets of the stage-driver." The Red Dog "Standard" had bewailed his departure in playful obituary verse, beginning, "Dear Johnny, thou hast left us," wherein the rhymes "bereft us," and "deplore" carried a vague allusion to "a thousand dollars more." A quiet contentment naturally suffused his personality, and he was more than usually lazy and deliberate in his speech. At midnight, when he was about to retire, he was a little surprised, however, by a tap on his door, followed by the presence of Mistress Peg Moffat, heiress, and landlady of Rockville Hotel.

Mr. Hamlin, despite his previous defense of Peg, had no liking for her. His fastidious taste rejected her uncomeliness; his habits of thought and life were all antagonistic to what he had heard of her niggardliness and greed. As she stood there, in a dirty calico wrapper, still redolent with the day's cuisine, crimson with embarrassment and the recent heat of the kitchen range, she certainly was not an alluring apparition. Happily for the lateness of the hour, her loneliness, and the infelix reputation of the man before her, she was at least a safe one. And I fear the very consciousness of this scarcely relieved her embarrassment.

"I wanted to say a few words to ye alone, Mr. Hamlin," she began, taking an unoffered seat on the end of his portmanteau, "or I should n't hev intruded. But it 's the only time I can ketch you, or you me, for I 'm down in the kitchen from sun-up till now."

She stopped awkwardly, as if to listen to the wind which was rattling against the windows, and spreading a film of rain against the opaque darkness without. Then, smoothing her wrapper over her knees, she remarked, as if opening a desultory conversation, "Thar 's a power of rain outside."

Mr. Hamlin's only response to this meteorological observation was a yawn, and a preliminary tug at his coat as he began to remove it.

"I thought ye could n't mind doin' me a favor," continued Peg, with a hard, awkward laugh; "partik'ly seein' ez folks allowed you 'd sorter been a friend o' mine, and hed stood up for me at times when you hed n't any partikler call to do it. I hev n't," she continued, looking down on her lap, and following with her finger and thumb a seam of her gown, — "I hev n't so many friends ez slings a kind word for me these times that I disremember them." Her under lip quivered a little here, and after vainly hunting for a forgotten handkerchief, she finally lifted the hem of her gown,

wiped her snub nose upon it, but left the tears still in her eyes as she raised them to the man.

Mr. Hamlin, who had by this time divested himself of his coat, stopped unbuttoning his waistcoat, and looked at her.

"Like ez not thar 'll be high water on the North Fork, ef this rain keeps on," said Peg, as if apologetically, looking toward the window.

The other rain having ceased, Mr. Hamlin began to unbutton his waistcoat again.

"I wanted to ask ye a favor about Mr. — about — Jack Folinsbee," began Peg again, hurriedly. "He 's ailin' agin', and is mighty low. And he 's losin' a heap o' money here and thar, and mostly to *you*. You cleaned him out of two thousand dollars last night — all he had."

"Well," said the gambler coldly.

"Well, I thought ez you woz a friend o' mine, I 'd ask ye to let up a little on him," said Peg, with an affected laugh. "You kin do it. Don't let him play with ye."

"Mistress Margaret Moffat," said Jack, with lazy deliberation, taking off his watch and beginning to wind it up; "ef you 're that much stuck after Jack Folinsbee *you* kin keep him off of me much easier than I kin. You 're a rich woman! Give him enough money to break my bank, or break himself for good and all; but don't keep him foolin' round me, in hopes to make a raise. It don't pay, Mistress Moffat, —it don't pay!"

A finer nature than Peg's would have misunderstood or resented the gambler's slang, and the miserable truths that underlay it. But she comprehended him instantly, and sat hopelessly silent.

"Ef you 'll take my advice," continued Jack, placing his watch and chain under his pillow, and quietly unloosing his cravat, "you 'll quit this yer foolin', marry that chap, and hand over to him the money and the money-makin' that 's

killin' you. He 'll get rid of it soon enough. I don't say this because *I* expect to git it, for when he 's got that much of a raise, he 'll make a break for 'Frisco, and lose it to some first-class sport *there*. I don't say neither that you may n't be in luck enough to reform him. I don't say neither — and it 's a derned sight more likely — that you may n't be luckier yet — and he 'll up and die afore he gits rid of your money. But I do say you 'll make him happy *now ;* 'and ez I reckon you 're about ez badly stuck after that chap ez I ever saw any woman, you won't be hurtin' your own feelin's either! "

The blood left Peg's face as she looked up. " But that 's *why* I can't give him the money — and he won't marry me without it."

Mr. Hamlin's hand dropped from the last button of his waistcoat. " Can't — give — him — the — money ? " he repeated slowly.

" No."

" Why ? "

" Because — because I *love* him."

Mr. Hamlin rebuttoned his waistcoat, and sat down patiently on the bed. Peg rose, and awkwardly drew the portmanteau a little bit nearer to him.

" When Jim Byways left me this yer property," she began, looking cautiously around, " he left it to me on *conditions*. Not conditions ez was in his *written* will — but conditions ez was *spoken*. A promise I made him in this very room, Mr. Hamlin, — this very room, and on that very bed you 're sittin' on, in which he died."

Like most gamblers, Mr. Hamlin was superstitious. He rose hastily from the bed, and took a chair beside the window. The wind shook it as if the discontented spirit of Mr. Byways were without, reinforcing his last injunction.

" I don't know if you remember him," said Peg feverishly. " He was a man ez hed suffered. All that he loved — wife,

fammerly, friends — had gone back on him! He tried to make light of it afore folk; but with me, being a poor gal, he let himself out. I never told anybody this — I don't know why he told *me* — I don't know," continued Peg with a sniffle, "why he wanted to make me unhappy too. But he made me promise that if he left me his fortune I 'd *never* — *never*, so help me, God — never share it with any man or woman that I *loved!* I did n't think it would be hard to keep that promise then, Mr. Hamlin, for I was very poor, and hed n't a friend nor a living bein' that was kind to me but *him.*"

"But you 've as good as broken your promise already," said Hamlin; "you 've given Jack money — as I know."

"Only what I made myself! Listen to me, Mr. Hamlin. When Jack proposed to me, I offered him about what I kalkilated I could earn myself. When he went away, and was sick and in trouble, I came here and took this hotel. I knew that by hard work I could make it pay. Don't laugh at me, please. I *did* work hard, and *did* make it pay — without takin' one cent of the fortin'. And all I made, workin' by night and day, I gave to him. I did, Mr. Hamlin. I ain't so hard to him as you think; though I might be kinder, I know."

Mr. Hamlin rose, deliberately resumed his coat, watch, hat, and overcoat. When he was completely dressed again, he turned to Peg.

"Do you mean to say that you 've been givin' all the money you make here to this A 1 first-class cherubim?"

"Yes, but he did n't know where I got it. O Mr. Hamlin, he did n't know that!"

"Do I understand you that he 's bin bucking agin faro with the money that you raised on hash? And *you* makin' the hash?"

'But he did n't know that — he would n't hev took it if I 'd told him."

"No; he 'd hev died fust!" said Mr. Hamlin gravely. "Why, he 's that sensitive — is Jack Folinsbee — that it nearly kills him to take money even of *me*. But where does this angel reside when he is n't fightin' the tiger, and is, so to speak, visible to the naked eye?"

"He — he — stops here," said Peg, with an awkward blush.

"I see. Might I ask the number of his room, or should I be a — disturbing him in his meditations?" continued Jack Hamlin with grave politeness.

"Oh, then you 'll promise? And you 'll talk to him, and make *him* promise?"

"Of course," said Hamlin quietly.

"And you 'll remember he 's sick — very sick? His room 's No. 44, at the end of the hall. Perhaps I had better go with you?"

"I 'll find it."

"And you won't be too hard on him?"

"I 'll be a father to him," said Hamlin demurely, as he opened the door and stepped into the hall. But he hesitated a moment, and then turned and gravely held out his hand. Peg took it timidly; he did not seem quite in earnest — and his black eyes, vainly questioned, indicated nothing. But he shook her hand warmly, and the next moment was gone.

He found the room with no difficulty. A faint cough from within, and a querulous protest, answered his knock. Mr. Hamlin entered without further ceremony. A sickening smell of drugs, a palpable flavor of stale dissipation, and the wasted figure of Jack Folinsbee, half dressed, extended upon the bed, greeted him. Mr. Hamlin was, for an instant, startled. There were hollow circles round the sick man's eyes, there was palsy in his trembling limbs, there was dissolution in his feverish breath.

"What 's up?" he asked huskily and nervously.

"I am; and I want *you* to get up too."

"I can't, Jack. I 'm regularly done up." He reached his shaking hand towards a glass half filled with suspicious, pungent-smelling liquid, but Mr. Hamlin stayed it.

"Do you want to get back that two thousand dollars you lost?"

"Yes."

"Well, get up and marry that woman downstairs."

Folinsbee laughed half hysterically, half sardonically.

"She won't give it to me."

"No, but *I* will."

"*You?*"

"Yes."

Folinsbee, with an attempt at a reckless laugh, rose, trembling and with difficulty, to his swollen feet. Hamlin eyed him narrowly, and then bade him lie down again. "To-morrow will do," he said, "and then" —

"If I don't" —

"If you don't," responded Hamlin, "why, I 'll just wade in and *cut you out!*"

But on the morrow Mr. Hamlin was spared that possible act of disloyalty. For in the night the already hesitating spirit of Mr. Jack Folinsbee took flight on the wings of the southeast storm. When or how it happened, nobody knew. Whether this last excitement and the near prospect of matrimony, or whether an over-dose of anodyne had hastened his end was never known. I only know that when they came to awaken him the next morning, the best that was left of him — a face still beautiful and boylike — looked up tearful at the eyes of Peg Moffat. "It serves me right — it 's a judgment," she said in a low whisper to Jack Hamlin; "for God knew that I 'd broken my word and willed all my property to him."

She did not long survive him. Whether Mr. Hamlin ever clothed with action the suggestion indicated in his

speech to the lamented Jack that night is not on record. He was always her friend, and on her demise became her executor. But the bulk of her property was left to a distant relation of handsome Jack Folinsbee, and so passed out of the control of Red Dog forever.

THE MAN ON THE BEACH

CHAPTER I

He lived beside a river that emptied into a great ocean. The narrow strip of land that lay between him and the estuary was covered at high tide by a shining film of water, at low tide with the cast-up offerings of sea and shore. Logs yet green, and saplings washed away from inland banks, battered fragments of wrecks and orange crates of bamboo, broken into tiny rafts, yet odorous with their lost freight, lay in long successive curves — the fringes and over-lappings of the sea. At high noon the shadow of a sea-gull's wing, or a sudden flurry and gray squall of sandpipers, themselves but shadows, was all that broke the monotonous glare of the level sands.

He had lived there alone for a twelvemonth. Although but a few miles from a thriving settlement, during that time his retirement had never been intruded upon, his seclusion remained unbroken. In any other community he might have been the subject of rumor or criticism, but the miners at Camp Rogue and the traders at Trinidad Head, themselves individual and eccentric, were profoundly indifferent to all other forms of eccentricity or heterodoxy that did not come in contact with their own. And certainly there was no form of eccentricity less aggressive than that of a hermit, had they chosen to give him that appellation. But they did not even do that, probably from lack of interest or perception. To the various traders who supplied his small wants he was known as "Kernel," "Judge," and "Boss." To the general public "The Man on the Beach" was considered a

sufficiently distinguishing title. His name, his occupation, rank, or antecedents, nobody cared to inquire. Whether this arose from a fear of reciprocal inquiry and interest, or from the profound indifference before referred to, I cannot say.

He did not look like a hermit. A man yet young, erect, well dressed, clean shaven, with a low voice, and a smile half melancholy, half cynical, was scarcely the conventional idea of a solitary. His dwelling, a rude improvement on a fisherman's cabin, had all the severe exterior simplicity of frontier architecture, but within it was comfortable and wholesome. Three rooms — a kitchen, a living-room, and a bedroom — were all it contained.

He had lived there long enough to see the dull monotony of one season lapse into the dull monotony of the other. The bleak northwest trade-winds had brought him mornings of staring sunlight and nights of fog and silence. The warmer southwest trades had brought him clouds, rain, and the transient glories of quick grasses and odorous beach blossoms. But summer or winter, wet or dry season, on one side rose always the sharply defined hills with their changeless background of evergreens; on the other side stretched always the illimitable ocean, as sharply defined against the horizon and as unchanging in its hue. The onset of spring and autumn tides, some changes among his feathered neighbors, the footprints of certain wild animals along the river's bank, and the hanging out of parti-colored signals from the wooded hillside far inland helped him to record the slow months. On summer afternoons, when the sun sank behind a bank of fog that, moving solemnly shoreward, at last encompassed him and blotted out sea and sky, his isolation was complete. The damp gray sea that flowed above and around and about him always seemed to shut out an intangible world beyond, and to be the only real presence. The booming of breakers scarce a dozen rods from his dwelling was but a vague and unintelligible sound,

or the echo of something past forever. Every morning when the sun tore away the misty curtain he awoke, dazed and bewildered, as upon a new world. The first sense of oppression over, he came to love at last this subtle spirit of oblivion; and at night, when its cloudy wings were folded over his cabin, he would sit alone with a sense of security he had never felt before. On such occasions he was apt to leave his door open, and listen as for footsteps; for what might not come to him out of this vague, nebulous world beyond? Perhaps even *she;* for this strange solitary was not insane nor visionary. He was never in spirit alone. For night and day, sleeping or waking, pacing the beach or crouching over his driftwood fire, a woman's face was always before him, — the face for whose sake and for cause of whom he sat there alone. He saw it in the morning sunlight; it was her white hands that were lifted from the crested breakers; it was the rustling of her skirt when the sea-wind swept through the beach-grasses; it was the loving whisper of her low voice when the long waves sank and died among the sedge and rushes. She was as omnipresent as sea and sky and level sand. Hence, when the fog wiped them away, she seemed to draw closer to him in the darkness. On one or two more gracious nights in midsummer, when the influence of the fervid noonday sun was still felt on the heated sands, the warm breath of the fog touched his cheeks as if it had been hers, and the tears started to his eyes.

Before the fogs came — for he arrived there in winter — he had found surcease and rest in the steady glow of a lighthouse upon the little promontory a league below his habitation. Even on the darkest nights, and in the tumults of storm, it spoke to him of a patience that was enduring and a steadfastness that was immutable. Later on he found a certain dumb companionship in an uprooted tree, which, floating down the river, had stranded hopelessly

upon his beach, but in the evening had again drifted away. Rowing across the estuary a day or two afterward, he recognized the tree again from a "blaze" of the settler's axe still upon its trunk. He was not surprised a week later to find the same tree in the sands before his dwelling, or that the next morning it should be again launched on its purposeless wanderings. And so, impelled by wind or tide, but always haunting his seclusion, he would meet it voyaging up the river at the flood, or see it tossing among the breakers on the bar, but always with the confidence of its returning sooner or later to an anchorage beside him. After the third month of his self-imposed exile, he was forced into a more human companionship, that was brief but regular. He was obliged to have menial assistance. While he might have eaten his bread "in sorrow" carelessly and mechanically, if it had been prepared for him, the occupation of cooking his own food brought the vulgarity and materialness of existence so near to his morbid sensitiveness that he could not eat the meal he had himself prepared. He did not yet wish to die, and when starvation or society seemed to be the only alternative, he chose the latter. An Indian woman, so hideous as to scarcely suggest humanity, at stated times performed for him these offices. When she did not come, which was not infrequent, he did not eat.

Such was the mental and physical condition of The Man on the Beach on January 1, 1869.

It was a still, bright day, following a week of rain and wind. Low down the horizon still lingered a few white flecks — the flying squadrons of the storm — as vague as distant sails. Southward the harbor-bar whitened occasionally but lazily; even the turbulent Pacific swell stretched its length wearily upon the shore. And toiling from the settlement over the low sand-dunes, a carriage at last halted half a mile from the solitary's dwelling.

"I reckon ye 'll hev to git out here," said the driver, pulling up to breathe his panting horses. "Ye can't git any nigher."

There was a groan of execration from the interior of the vehicle, a hysterical little shriek, and one or two shrill expressions of feminine disapprobation, but the driver moved not. At last a masculine head expostulated from the window: "Look here; you agreed to take us to the house. Why, it 's a mile away at least!"

"Thar, or tharabouts, I reckon," said the driver, coolly crossing his legs on the box.

"It 's no use talking; *I* can never walk through this sand and horrid glare," said a female voice quickly and imperatively. Then, apprehensively, "Well, of all the places!"

"Well, I never!"

"This *does* exceed everything."

"It 's really *too* idiotic for anything."

It was noticeable that while the voices betrayed the difference of age and sex, they bore a singular resemblance to each other, and a certain querulousness of pitch that was dominant.

"I reckon I 've gone about as fur as I allow to go with them hosses," continued the driver suggestively; "and as time 's vallyble, ye 'd better onload."

"The wretch does not mean to leave us here alone?" said a female voice in shrill indignation. "You 'll wait for us, driver?" said a masculine voice confidently.

"How long?" asked the driver.

There was a hurried consultation within. The words "Might send us packing," "May take all night to get him to listen to reason," "Bother! whole thing over in ten minutes," came from the window. The driver meanwhile had settled himself back in his seat, and whistled in patient contempt of a fashionable fare that did n't know its own

mind nor destination. Finally, the masculine head was thrust out, and, with a certain potential air of judicially ending a difficulty, said, —

"You 're to follow us slowly, and put up your horses in the stable or barn until we want you."

An ironical laugh burst from the driver. "Oh yes — in the stable or barn — in course. But, my eyes sorter failin' me, mebbee, now, some ev you younger folks will kindly pint out the stable or barn of the Kernel's. Woa! — will ye? — woa! Give me a chance to pick out that there barn or stable to put ye in!" This in arch confidence to the horses, who had not moved.

Here the previous speaker, rotund, dignified, and elderly, alighted indignantly, closely followed by the rest of the party, two ladies and a gentleman. One of the ladies was past the age, but not the fashion, of youth, and her Parisian dress clung over her wasted figure and well-bred bones artistically if not gracefully; the younger lady, evidently her daughter, was crisp and pretty, and carried off the aquiline nose and aristocratic emaciation of her mother with a certain piquancy and a dash that was charming. The gentleman was young, thin, with the family characteristics, but otherwise indistinctive.

With one accord they all faced directly toward the spot indicated by the driver's whip. Nothing but the bare, bleak, rectangular outlines of the cabin of The Man on the Beach met their eyes. All else was a desolate expanse, unrelieved by any structure higher than the tussocks of scant beach-grass that clothed it. They were so utterly helpless that the driver's derisive laughter gave way at last to good humor and suggestion. "Look yer," he said finally, "I don't know ez it 's your fault you don't know this kentry ez well ez you do Yurup; so I 'll drag this yer team over to Robinson's on the river, give the horses a bite, and then meander down this yer ridge, and wait for ye. Ye 'll see

me from the Kernel's." And without waiting for a reply, he swung his horses' heads toward the river, and rolled away.

The same querulous protest that had come from the windows arose from the group, but vainly. Then followed accusations and recrimination. "It 's *your* fault; you might have written, and had him meet us at the settlement." "You wanted to take him by surprise!" "I did n't." "You know if I 'd written that we were coming, he 'd have taken good care to run away from us." "Yes, to some more inaccessible place." "There can be none worse than this," etc., etc. But it was so clearly evident that nothing was to be done but to go forward, that even in the midst of their wrangling they straggled on in Indian file toward the distant cabin, sinking ankle-deep in the yielding sand, punctuating their verbal altercation with sighs, and only abating it at a scream from the elder lady.

"Where 's Maria?"

"Gone on ahead!" grunted the younger gentleman, in a bass voice, so incongruously large for him that it seemed to have been a ventriloquistic contribution by somebody else.

It was too true. Maria, after adding her pungency to the general conversation, had darted on ahead. But alas! that swift Camilla, after scouring the plain some two hundred feet with her demi-train, came to grief on an unbending tussock and sat down, panting but savage. As they plodded wearily toward her, she bit her red lips, smacked them on her cruel little white teeth like a festive and sprightly ghoul, and lisped: —

"You *do* look so like guys! For all the world like those English shopkeepers we met on the Righi, doing the three-guinea excursion in their Sunday clothes!"

Certainly the spectacle of those exotically plumed bipeds, whose fine feathers were already bedrabbled by sand and

growing limp in the sea-breeze, was somewhat dissonant with the rudeness of sea and sky and shore. A few gulls screamed at them; a loon, startled from the lagoon, arose shrieking and protesting, with painfully extended legs, in obvious burlesque of the younger gentleman. The elder lady felt the justice of her gentle daughter's criticism, and retaliated with simple directness, —

"Your skirt is ruined, your hair is coming down, your hat is half off your head, and your shoes — in Heaven's name, Maria! what *have* you done with your shoes?"

Maria had exhibited a slim stockinged foot from under her skirt. It was scarcely three fingers broad, with an arch as patrician as her nose. "Somewhere between here and the carriage," she answered. "Dick can run back and find it, while he is looking for your brooch, mamma. Dick's so obliging."

The robust voice of Dick thundered, but the wasted figure of Dick feebly ploughed its way back, and returned with the missing buskin.

"I may as well carry them in my hand like the market girls at Saumur, for we have got to wade soon," said Miss Maria, sinking her own terrors in the delightful contemplation of the horror in her parent's face, as she pointed to a shining film of water slowly deepening in a narrow swale in the sands between them and the cabin.

"It's the tide," said the elder gentleman. "If we intend to go on we must hasten. Permit me, my dear madam" — and before she could reply he had lifted the astounded matron in his arms and made gallantly for the ford. The gentle Maria cast an ominous eye on her brother, who, with manifest reluctance, performed for her the same office. But that acute young lady kept her eyes upon the preceding figure of the elder gentleman, and seeing him suddenly and mysteriously disappear to his armpits, unhesitatingly threw herself from her brother's protecting arms, —

an action which instantly precipitated him into the water, — and paddled hastily to the opposite bank, where she eventually assisted in pulling the elderly gentleman out of the hollow into which he had fallen, and in rescuing her mother, who floated helplessly on the surface, upheld by her skirts, like a gigantic and variegated water-lily. Dick followed with a single gaiter. In another minute they were safe on the opposite bank.

The elder lady gave way to tears; Maria laughed hysterically; Dick mingled a bass oath with the now audible surf; the elder gentleman, whose florid face the salt water had bleached, and whose dignity seemed to have been washed away, accounted for both by saying he thought it was a quicksand.

"It might have been," said a quiet voice behind them; "you should have followed the sand-dunes half a mile farther to the estuary."

They turned instantly at the voice. It was that of The Man on the Beach. They all rose to their feet and uttered together, save one, the single exclamation, "James!" The elder gentleman said, "Mr. North," and, with a slight resumption of his former dignity, buttoned his coat over his damp shirt-front.

There was a silence, in which the Man on the Beach looked gravely down upon them. If they had intended to impress him by any suggestion of a gay, brilliant, and sensuous world beyond in their own persons, they had failed, and they knew it. Keenly alive as they had always been to external prepossession, they felt that they looked forlorn and ludicrous, and that the situation lay in his hands. The elderly lady again burst into tears of genuine distress, Maria colored over her cheek-bones, and Dick stared at the ground in sullen disquiet.

"You had better get up," said The Man on the Beach, after a moment's thought, "and come up to the cabin. I

cannot offer you a change of garments, but you can dry them by the fire."

They all rose together, and again said in chorus, "James!" but this time with an evident effort to recall some speech or action previously resolved upon and committed to memory. The elder lady got so far as to clasp her hands, and add, "You have not forgotten us, James, O James!" the younger gentleman to attempt a brusque "Why, Jim, old boy," that ended in querulous incoherence; the young lady to cast a half-searching, half-coquettish look at him; and the old gentleman to begin, "Our desire, Mr. North" — but the effort was futile. Mr. James North, standing before them with folded arms, looked from the one to the other.

"I have not thought much of you for a twelvemonth," he said quietly, "but I have not forgotten you. Come!"

He led the way a few steps in advance, they following silently. In this brief interview they felt he had resumed the old dominance and independence against which they had rebelled; more than that, in this half-failure of their first concerted action they had changed their querulous bickerings to a sullen distrust of each other, and walked moodily apart as they followed James North into his house. A fire blazed brightly on the hearth; a few extra seats were quickly extemporized from boxes and chests, and the elder lady, with the skirt of her dress folded over her knees, — looking not unlike an exceedingly overdressed jointed doll, — dried her flounces and her tears together. Miss Maria took in the scant appointments of the house in one single glance, and then fixed her eyes upon James North, who, the least concerned of the party, stood before them, grave and patiently expectant.

"Well," began the elder lady in a high key, "after all this worry and trouble you have given us, James, have n't you anything to say? Do you know — have you the least

idea what you are doing? what egregious folly you are committing? what everybody is saying? Eh? Heavens and earth! do you know who I am?"

"You are my father's brother's widow, Aunt Mary," returned James quietly. "If I am committing any folly it only concerns myself; if I cared for what people said I should not be here; if I loved society enough to appreciate its good report I should stay with it."

"But they say you have run away from society to pine alone for a worthless creature — a woman who has used you, as she has used and thrown away others — a" —

"A woman," chimed in Dick, who had thrown himself on James's bed while his patent leathers were drying, — "a woman that all the fellers know never intended"— Here, however, he met James North's eye, and, muttering something about "whole thing being too idiotic to talk about," relapsed into silence.

"You know," continued Mrs. North, "that while we and all our set shut our eyes to your very obvious relations with that woman, and while I myself often spoke of it to others as a simple flirtation, and averted a scandal for your sake, and when the climax was reached, and she herself gave you an opportunity to sever your relations, and nobody need have been wiser — and she 'd have had all the blame — and it 's only what she 's accustomed to — you — you! you, James North! — you must nonsensically go, and, by this extravagant piece of idiocy and sentimental tomfoolery, let everybody see how serious the whole affair was, and how deep it hurt you! and here in this awful place — alone — where you 're half drowned to get to it, and are willing to be wholly drowned to get away! Oh, don't talk to me! I won't hear it — it 's just too idiotic for anything!"

The subject of this outburst neither spoke nor moved a single muscle.

"Your aunt, Mr. North, speaks excitedly," said the elder

gentleman; "yet I think she does not overestimate the unfortunate position in which your odd fancy places you. I know nothing of the reasons that have impelled you to this step; I only know that the popular opinion is that the cause is utterly inadequate. You are still young, with a future before you. I need not say how your present conduct may imperil that. If you expected to achieve any good — even to your own satisfaction — by this conduct"—

"Yes — if there was anything to be gained by it!" broke in Mrs. North.

"If you ever thought she'd come back! — but that kind of woman don't. They must have change. Why"— began Dick suddenly, and as suddenly lying down again.

"Is this all you have come to say?" asked James North, after a moment's patient silence, looking from one to the other.

"All!" screamed Mrs. North; "is it not enough?"

"Not to change my mind nor my residence at present," replied North coolly.

"Do you mean to continue this folly all your life?"

"And have a coroner's inquest, and advertisements and all the facts in the papers?"

"And have *her* read the melancholy details, and know that you were faithful and she was not?"

This last shot was from the gentle Maria, who bit her lips as it glanced from the immovable man.

"I believe there is nothing more to say," continued North quietly. "I am willing to believe your intentions are as worthy as your zeal. Let us say no more," he added with grave weariness; "the tide is rising, and your coachman is signaling you from the bank."

There was no mistaking the unshaken positiveness of the man, which was all the more noticeable from its gentle but utter indifference to the wishes of the party. He turned his back upon them as they gathered hurriedly around the

elder gentleman, while the words, "He cannot be in his right mind," "It 's your duty to do it," "It 's sheer insanity," "Look at his eye!" all fell unconsciously upon his ear.

"One word more, Mr. North," said the elder gentleman a little portentously, to conceal an evident embarrassment. "It may be that your conduct might suggest to minds more practical than your own the existence of some aberration of the intellect — some temporary mania — that might force your best friends into a quasi-legal attitude of" —

"Declaring me insane," interrupted James North, with the slight impatience of a man more anxious to end a prolix interview than to combat an argument. "I think differently. As my aunt's lawyer, you know that within the last year I have deeded most of my property to her and her family. I cannot believe that so shrewd an adviser as Mr. Edmund Carter would ever permit proceedings that would invalidate that conveyance."

Maria burst into a laugh of such wicked gratification that James North, for the first time, raised his eyes with something of interest to her face. She colored under them, but returned his glance with another like a bayonet flash. The party slowly moved toward the door, James North following.

"Then this is your final answer?" asked Mrs. North, stopping imperiously on the threshold.

"I beg your pardon?" queried North, half abstractedly.

"Your final answer?"

"Oh, certainly."

Mrs. North flounced away a dozen rods in rage. This was unfortunate for North. It gave them the final attack in detail. Dick began: "Come along! You know you can advertise for her with a personal down there, and the old woman would n't object as long as you were careful and put in an appearance now and then!"

As Dick limped away, Mr. Carter thought, in confidence, that the whole matter — even to suit Mr. North's sensitive nature — might be settled there. "*She* evidently expects you to return. My opinion is that she never left San Francisco. You can't tell anything about these women."

With this last sentence on his indifferent ear, James North seemed to be left free. Maria had rejoined her mother; but as they crossed the ford, and an intervening sand-hill hid the others from sight, that piquant young lady suddenly appeared on the hill and stood before him.

"And you're not coming back?" she said directly.

"No."

"Never?"

"I cannot say."

"Tell me! what is there about some women to make men love them so?"

"Love," replied North quietly.

"No, it cannot be — it is not *that!*"

North looked over the hill and round the hill, and looked bored.

"Oh, I'm going now. But one moment, Jim! I didn't want to come. They dragged me here. Good-by." She raised a burning face and eyes to his. He leaned forward and imprinted the perfunctory, cousinly kiss of the period upon her cheek.

"Not that way," she said angrily, clutching his wrists with her long, thin fingers; "you sha'n't kiss me in that way, James North."

With the faintest, ghost-like passing of a twinkle in the corners of his sad eyes, he touched his lips to hers. With the contact, she caught him round the neck, pressed her burning lips and face to his forehead, his cheeks, the very curves of his chin and throat, and — with a laugh was gone.

CHAPTER II

Had the kinsfolk of James North any hope that their visit might revive some lingering desire he still combated to enter once more the world they represented, that hope would have soon died. Whatever effect this episode had upon the solitary — and he had become so self-indulgent of his sorrow, and so careless of all that came between him and it, as to meet opposition with profound indifference — the only appreciable result was a greater attraction for the solitude that protected him, and he grew even to love the bleak shore and barren sands that had proved so inhospitable to others. There was a new meaning to the roar of the surges, an honest, loyal sturdiness in the unchanging persistency of the uncouth and blustering trade-winds, and a mute fidelity in the shining sands, treacherous to all but him. With such bandogs to lie in wait for trespassers, should he not be grateful?

If no bitterness was awakened by the repeated avowal of the unfaithfulness of the woman he loved, it was because he had always made the observation and experience of others give way to the dominance of his own insight. No array of contradictory facts ever shook his belief or unbelief; like all egotists, he accepted them as truths controlled by a larger truth of which he alone was cognizant. His simplicity, which was but another form of his egotism, was so complete as to baffle ordinary malicious cunning, and so he was spared the experience and knowledge that come to a lower nature, and help to debase it.

Exercise and the stimulus of the few wants that sent him hunting or fishing kept up his physical health. Never a lover of rude freedom or outdoor life, his sedentary predilections and nice tastes kept him from lapsing into barbarian excess; never a sportsman, he followed the chase with no

feverish exultation. Even dumb creatures found out his secret, and at times, stalking moodily over the upland, the brown deer and elk would cross his path without fear or molestation, or, idly lounging in his canoe within the river-bar, flocks of wild fowl would settle within stroke of his listless oar. And so the second winter of his hermitage drew near its close, and with it came a storm that passed into local history, and is still remembered. It uprooted giant trees along the river, and with them the tiny rootlets of the life he was idly fostering.

The morning had been fitfully turbulent, the wind veering several points south and west, with suspicious lulls, unlike the steady onset of the regular southwest trades. High overhead the long manes of racing cirro-stratus streamed with flying gulls and hurrying water-fowl; plover piped incessantly, and a flock of timorous sandpipers sought the low ridge of his cabin, while a wrecking crew of curlew hastily manned the uprooted tree that tossed wearily beyond the bar. By noon the flying clouds huddled together in masses, and then were suddenly exploded in one vast opaque sheet over the heavens. The sea became gray, and suddenly wrinkled and old. There was a dumb, half-articulate cry in the air — rather a confusion of many sounds, as of the booming of distant guns, the clangor of a bell, the trampling of many waves, the creaking of timbers and soughing of leaves, that sank and fell ere you could yet distinguish them. And then it came on to blow. For two hours it blew strongly. At the time the sun should have set, the wind had increased; in fifteen minutes darkness shut down — even the white sands lost their outlines, and sea and shore and sky lay in the grip of a relentless and aggressive power.

Within his cabin, by the leaping light of his gusty fire, North sat alone. His first curiosity passed, the turmoil without no longer carried his thought beyond its one con-

verging centre. *She* had come to him on the wings of the storm, even as she had been borne to him on the summer fog-cloud. Now and then the wind shook the cabin, but he heeded it not. He had no fears for its safety; it presented its low gable to the full fury of the wind that year by year had piled, and was even now piling, protecting buttresses of sand against it. With each succeeding gust it seemed to nestle more closely to its foundations in the whirl of flying sand that rattled against its roof and windows. It was nearly midnight when a sudden thought brought him to his feet. What if *she* were exposed to the fury of such a night as this? What could he do to help her? Perhaps even now, as he sat there idle, she — Hark! was not that a gun — No? Yes, surely!

He hurriedly unbolted the door, but the strength of the wind and the impact of drifted sand resisted his efforts. With a new and feverish strength possessing him he forced it open wide enough to permit his egress, when the wind caught him as a feather, rolled him over and over, and then, grappling him again, held him down hard and fast against the drift. Unharmed, but unable to move, he lay there, hearing the multitudinous roar of the storm, but unable to distinguish one familiar sound in the savage medley. At last he managed to crawl flat on his face to the cabin, and, refastening the door, threw himself upon his bed.

He was awakened from a fitful dream of his cousin Maria. She with a supernatural strength seemed to be holding the door against some unseen, unknown power that moaned and strove without, and threw itself in despairing force against the cabin. He could see the lithe undulations of her form as she alternately yielded to its power, and again drew the door against it, coiling herself around the log-hewn doorpost with a hideous, snake-like suggestion. And then a struggle and a heavy blow, which shook the very foundations of the structure, awoke him. He leaped

to his feet, and into an inch of water! By the flickering firelight he could see it oozing and dripping from the crevices of the logs and broadening into a pool by the chimney. A scrap of paper torn from an envelope was floating idly on its current. Was it the overflow of the backed-up waters of the river? He was not left long in doubt. Another blow upon the gable of the house, and a torrent of spray leaped down the chimney, scattered the embers far and wide, and left him in utter darkness. Some of the spray clung to his lips; it was salt. The great ocean had beaten down the river-bar and was upon him!

Was there aught to fly to? No! The cabin stood upon the highest point of the sand-spit, and the low swale on one side crossed by his late visitors was a seething mass of breakers, while the estuary behind him was now the ocean itself. There was nothing to do but to wait.

The very helplessness of his situation was, to a man of his peculiar temperament, an element of patient strength. The instinct of self-preservation was still strong in him, but he had no fear of death, nor, indeed, any presentiment of it; yet if it came, it was an easy solution of the problem that had been troubling him, and it wiped off the slate! He thought of the sarcastic prediction of his cousin, and death in the form that threatened him was the obliteration of his home and even the ground upon which it stood. There would be nothing to record; no stain could come upon the living. The instinct that kept him true to *her* would tell her how he died; if it did not, it was equally well. And with this simple fatalism, his only belief, this strange man groped his way to his bed, lay down, and in a few moments was asleep. The storm still roared without. Once again the surges leaped against the cabin, but it was evident that the wind was abating with the tide.

When he awoke it was high noon, and the sun was shining brightly. For some time he lay in a delicious languor,

doubting if he was alive or dead, but feeling through every nerve and fibre an exquisite sense of peace — a rest he had not known since his boyhood — a relief he scarcely knew from what. He felt that he was smiling, and yet his pillow was wet with the tears that glittered still on his lashes. The sand blocking up his doorway, he leaped lightly from his window. A few clouds were still sailing slowly in the heavens, the trailing plumes of a great benediction that lay on sea and shore. He scarcely recognized the familiar landscape; a new bar had been formed in the river, and a narrow causeway of sand that crossed the lagoon and marshes to the river-bank and the upland trail seemed to bring him nearer to humanity again. He was conscious of a fresh, childlike delight in all this, and when, a moment later, he saw the old uprooted tree, now apparently forever moored and imbedded in the sand beside his cabin, he ran to it with a sense of joy.

Its trailing roots were festooned with clinging seaweed and the long, snaky, undulating stems of the sea-turnip; and fixed between two crossing roots was a bamboo orange crate, almost intact. As he walked toward it he heard a strange cry, unlike anything the barren sands had borne before. Thinking it might be some strange sea-bird caught in the meshes of the seaweed, he ran to the crate and looked within. It was half filled with sea-moss and feathery algæ. The cry was repeated. He brushed aside the weeds with his hands. It was not a wounded sea-bird, but a living human child!

As he lifted it from its damp enwrappings he saw that it was an infant eight or nine months old. How and when it had been brought there, or what force had guided that elfish cradle to his very door, he could not determine; but it must have been left early, for it was quite warm, and its clothing almost dried by the blazing morning sun. To wrap his coat about it, to run to his cabin with it, to start

out again with the appalling conviction that nothing could be done for it there, occupied some moments. His nearest neighbor was Trinidad Joe, a "logger," three miles up the river. He remembered to have heard vaguely that he was a man of family. To half strangle the child with a few drops from his whiskey flask, to extricate his canoe from the marsh, and strike out into the river with his waif, was at least to do something. In half an hour he had reached the straggling cabin and sheds of Trinidad Joe, and from the few scanty flowers that mingled with the brushwood fence, and a surplus of linen fluttering on the line, he knew that his surmise as to Trinidad Joe's domestic establishment was correct.

The door at which he knocked opened upon a neat, plainly furnished room, and the figure of a buxom woman of twenty-five. With an awkwardness new to him, North stammered out the circumstances of his finding the infant, and the object of his visit. Before he had finished, the woman by some feminine trick had taken the child from his hands ere he knew it; and when he paused, out of breath, burst into a fit of laughter. North tried to laugh, too, but failed.

When the woman had wiped the tears from a pair of very frank blue eyes, and hidden two rows of very strong white teeth again, she said: —

"Look yar! You 're that looney sort o' chap that lives alone over on the spit yonder, ain't ye?"

North hastened to admit all that the statement might imply.

"And so ye 've had a baby left ye to keep you company? Lordy!" Here she looked as if dangerously near a relapse, and then added, as if in explanation of her conduct, —

"When I saw ye paddlin' down here — you thet ez shy as elk in summer — I sez, 'He 's sick.' But a baby — O Lordy!"

For a moment North almost hated her. A woman who,

in this pathetic, perhaps almost tragic, picture saw only a ludicrous image, and that image himself, was of another race than he had ever mingled with. Profoundly indifferent as he had always been to the criticism of his equals in station, the mischievous laughter of this illiterate woman jarred upon him worse than his cousin's sarcasm. It was with a little dignity that he pointed out the fact that at present the child needed nourishment. "It 's very young," he added. "I 'm afraid it wants its natural nourishment."

"Whar is it to get it?" asked the woman.

James North hesitated, and looked around. There should be a baby somewhere! there *must* be a baby somewhere! "I thought that you," he stammered, conscious of an awkward coloring — "I — that is — I" — He stopped short, for she was already cramming her apron into her mouth, too late, however, to stop the laugh that overflowed it. When she found her breath again, she said, —

"Look yar! I don't wonder they said you was looney! I 'm Trinidad Joe's onmarried darter, and the only woman in this house. Any fool could have told you that. Now, ef you can rig us up a baby out o' them facts, I 'd like to see it done."

Inwardly furious but outwardly polite, James North begged her pardon, deplored his ignorance, and, with a courtly bow, made a movement to take the child. But the woman as quickly drew it away.

"Not much," she said hastily. "What! trust that poor critter to you? No, sir! Thar 's more ways of feeding a baby, young man, than you knows on, with all your 'nat'ral nourishment.' But it looks kinder logy and stupid."

North freezingly admitted that he had given the infant whiskey as a stimulant.

"You did? Come, now, that ain't so looney after all. Well, I 'll take the baby, and when dad comes home we 'll see what can be done."

North hesitated. His dislike of the woman was intense, and yet he knew no one else, and the baby needed instant care. Besides, he began to see the ludicrousness of his making a first call on his neighbors with a foundling to dispose of. She saw his hesitation, and said, —

"Ye don't know me, in course. Well, I'm Bessy Robinson, Trinidad Joe Robinson's daughter. I reckon dad will give me a character if you want references, or any of the boys on the river."

"I'm only thinking of the trouble I'm giving you, Miss Robinson, I assure you. Any expense you may incur" —

"Young man," said Bessy Robinson, turning sharply on her heel, and facing him with her black brows a little contracted, "if it comes to expenses, I reckon I'll pay you for that baby, or not take it at all. But I don't know you well enough to quarrel with you on sight. So leave the child to me, and if you choose, paddle down here to-morrow, after sun-up, — the ride will do you good, — and see it, and dad thrown in. Good-by!" and with one powerful but well-shaped arm thrown around the child, and the other crooked at the dimpled elbow a little aggressively, she swept by James North and entered a bedroom, closing the door behind her.

When Mr. James North reached his cabin it was dark. As he rebuilt his fire, and tried to rearrange the scattered and disordered furniture, and remove the débris of last night's storm, he was conscious for the first time of feeling lonely. He did not miss the child. Beyond the instincts of humanity and duty he had really no interest in its welfare or future. He was rather glad to get rid of it — he would have preferred to some one else; and yet *she* looked as if she were competent. And then came the reflection that since the morning he had not once thought of the woman he loved. The like had never occurred in his twelvemonth's solitude. So he set to work, thinking of

her and of his sorrows, until the word "looney," in connection with his suffering, flashed across his memory. "Looney"! It was not a nice word. It suggested something less than insanity; something that might happen to a common, unintellectual sort of person. He remembered the loon, an ungainly feathered neighbor, that was popularly supposed to have lent its name to the adjective. Could it be possible that people looked upon him as one too hopelessly and uninterestingly afflicted for sympathy or companionship, too unimportant and common for even ridicule; or was this but the coarse interpretation of that vulgar girl?

Nevertheless, the next morning "after sun-up" James North was at Trinidad Joe's cabin. That worthy proprietor himself — a long, lank man, with even more than the ordinary rural Western characteristics of ill health, ill feeding, and melancholy — met him on the bank, clothed in a manner and costume that was a singular combination of the frontiersman and the sailor. When North had again related the story of his finding the child, Trinidad Joe pondered.

"It mout hev been stowed away in one of them crates for safe-keeping," he said musingly, "and washed off the deck o' one o' them Tahiti brigs goin' down fer oranges. Leastways, it never got thar from these parts."

"But it 's a miracle its life was saved at all. It must have been some hours in the water."

"Them brigs lays their course well inshore, and it was just mebbee a toss up if the vessel clawed off the reef at all! And ez to the child keepin' up, why, dog my skin! that 's just the contrariness o' things," continued Joe, in sententious cynicism. "Ef an able seaman had fallen from the yard-arm that night he 'd been sunk in sight o' the ship; and thet baby ez can't swim a stroke sails ashore sound asleep, with the waves for a baby-jumper."

North, who was half relieved, yet half awkwardly dis-

appointed at not seeing Bessy, ventured to ask how the child was doing.

"She 'll do all right now," said a frank voice above, and, looking up, North discerned the round arms, blue eyes, and white teeth of the daughter at the window. "She 's all hunkey, and has an appetite — ef she hez n't got her 'nat'ral nourishment.' Come, dad! heave ahead, and tell the stranger what you and me allow we 'll do, and don't stand there swappin' lies with him."

"Weel," said Trinidad Joe dejectedly, "Bess allows she can rar that baby and do justice to it. And I don't say — though I 'm her father — that she can't. But when Bess wants anything she wants it all, clean down; no halfways nor leavin's for her."

"That 's me! go on, dad — you 're chippin' in the same notch every time," said Miss Robinson with cheerful directness.

"Well, we agree to put the job up this way. We 'll take the child and you 'll give us a paper or writin' makin' over all your right and title. How 's that?"

Without knowing exactly why he did, Mr. North objected decidedly.

"Do you think we won't take good care of it?" asked Miss Bessy sharply.

"That is not the question," said North a little hotly. "In the first place, the child is not mine to give. It has fallen into my hands as a trust — the first hands that received it from its parents. I do not think it right to allow any other hands to come between theirs and mine."

Miss Bessy left the window. In another moment she appeared from the house, and, walking directly toward North, held out a somewhat substantial hand. "Good!" she said, as she gave his fingers an honest squeeze. "You ain't so looney after all. Dad, he 's right! He sha'n't gin it up, but we 'll go halves in it, he and me. He 'll be

father and I'll be mother till death do us part, or the reg'lar family turns up. Well — what do you say?"

More pleased than he dared confess to himself with the praise of this common girl, Mr. James North assented. Then would he see the baby? He would, and Trinidad Joe, having already seen the baby, and talked of the baby, and felt the baby, and indeed had the baby offered to him in every way during the past night, concluded to give some of his valuable time to logging, and left them together.

Mr. North was obliged to admit that the baby was thriving. He, moreover, listened with polite interest to the statement that the baby's eyes were hazel, like his own; that it had five teeth; that she was, for a girl of that probable age, a robust child; and yet Mr. North lingered? Finally, with his hand on the door-lock, he turned to Bess and said, —

"May I ask you an odd question, Miss Robinson?"

"Go on."

"Why did you think I was — 'looney'?"

The frank Miss Robinson bent her head over the baby.

"Why?"

"Yes, why?"

"Because you *were* looney."

"Oh!"

"But" —

"Yes" —

"You'll get over it."

And under the shallow pretext of getting the baby's food, she retired to the kitchen, where Mr. North had the supreme satisfaction of seeing her, as he passed the window, sitting on a chair with her apron over her head, shaking with laughter.

For the next two or three days he did not visit the Robinsons, but gave himself up to past memories. On the third day he had — it must be confessed not without

some effort — brought himself into that condition of patient sorrow which had been his habit. The episode of the storm and the finding of the baby began to fade, as had faded the visit of his relatives. It had been a dull wet day, and he was sitting by his fire, when there came a tap at his door. "Flora," by which juvenescent name his aged Indian handmaid was known, usually announced her presence with an imitation of a curlew's cry: it could not be she. He fancied he heard the trailing of a woman's dress against the boards, and started to his feet, deathly pale, with a name upon his lips. But the door was impatiently thrown open, and showed Bessy Robinson! — and the baby!

With a feeling of relief he could not understand, he offered her a seat. She turned her frank eyes on him curiously.

"You look skeert!"

"I was startled. You know I see nobody here!"

"Thet's so. But look yar, do you ever use a doctor?"

Not clearly understanding her, he in turn asked, "Why?"

"'Cause you must rise up and get one now — thet's why. This yer baby of ours is sick. We don't use a doctor at our house, — we don't beleeve in 'em, hain't no call for 'em, — but this yer baby's parents mebbee did. So rise up out o' that cheer, and get one."

James North looked at Miss Robinson and rose, albeit a little in doubt, and hesitating.

Miss Robinson saw it. "I should n't hev troubled ye, nor ridden three mile to do it, if ther 'ed been any one else to send. But dad 's over at Eureka, buying logs, and I 'm alone. Hello — wher' yer goin'?"

North had seized his hat, and opened the door. "For a doctor," he replied amazedly.

"Did ye kalkilate to walk six miles and back?"

"Certainly — I have no horse."

"But *I* have, and you'll find her tethered outside. She ain't much to look at, but when you strike the trail she'll go."

"But *you* — how will *you* return?"

"Well," said Miss Robinson, drawing her chair to the fire, taking off her hat and shawl, and warming her knees by the blaze; "I did n't reckon to return. You'll find me here when you come back with the doctor. Go! Skedaddle quick."

She did not have to repeat the command. In another instant James North was in Miss Bessy's seat, — a man's dragoon saddle, — and pounding away through the sand. Two facts were in his mind: one was that he, the "looney," was about to open communication with the wisdom and contemporary criticism of the settlement, by going for a doctor to administer to a sick and anonymous infant in his possession; the other was that his solitary house was in the hands of a self-invited, large-limbed, illiterate, but rather comely young woman. These facts he could not gallop away from, but to his credit be it recorded that he fulfilled his mission zealously, if not coherently, to the doctor, who during the rapid ride gathered the idea that North had rescued a young married woman from drowning, who had since given birth to a child.

The few words that set the doctor right when he arrived at the cabin might in any other community have required further explanation, but Dr. Duchesne, an old army surgeon, was prepared for everything and indifferent to all. "The infant," he said, "was threatened with inflammation of the lungs; at present there was no danger, but the greatest care and caution must be exercised. Particularly exposure should be avoided." "That settles the whole matter then," said Bessy potentially. Both gentlemen looked their surprise. "It means," she condescended to further

explain, "that *you* must ride that filly home, wait for the old man to come to-morrow, and then ride back here with some of my duds, for thar's no 'day-days' nor picnicking for that baby ontil she's better. And I reckon to stay with her ontil she is."

"She certainly is unable to bear any exposure at present," said the doctor, with an amused side glance at North's perplexed face. "Miss Robinson is right. I'll ride with you over the sands as far as the trail."

"I'm afraid," said North, feeling it incumbent upon him to say something, "that you 'll hardly find it as comfortable here as" —

"I reckon not," she said simply, "but I did n't expect much."

North turned a little wearily away. "Good-night," she said suddenly, extending her hand, with a gentler smile of lip and eye than he had ever before noticed, "good-night. Take good care of dad."

The doctor and North rode together some moments in silence. North had another fact presented to him, that is, that he was going a-visiting, and that he had virtually abandoned his former life; also that it would be profanation to think of his sacred woe in the house of a stranger.

"I dare say," said the doctor suddenly, "you are not familiar with the type of woman Miss Bessy presents so perfectly. Your life has been spent among the conventional class."

North froze instantly at what seemed to be a probing of his secret. Disregarding the last suggestion, he made answer simply and truthfully that he had never met any Western girl like Bessy.

"That 's your bad luck," said the doctor. "You think her coarse and illiterate?"

Mr. North had been so much struck with her kindness that really he had not thought of it.

"That 's not so," said the doctor curtly; "although even if you told her so she would not think any the less of you — nor of herself. If she spoke rustic Greek instead of bad English, and wore a cestus in place of an ill-fitting corset, you 'd swear she was a goddess. There 's your trail. Good-night."

CHAPTER III

James North did not sleep well that night. He had taken Miss Bessy's bedroom, at her suggestion, there being but two, and "dad never using sheets and not bein' keerful in his habits." It was neat, but that was all. The scant ornamentation was atrocious; two or three highly-colored prints, a shell work-box, a ghastly winter bouquet of skeleton leaves and mosses, a starfish, and two china vases hideous enough to have been worshiped as Buddhist idols, exhibited the gentle recreation of the fair occupant, and the possible future education of the child. In the morning he was met by Joe, who received the message of his daughter with his usual dejection, and suggested that North stay with him until the child was better. That event was still remote; North found, on his return to his cabin, that the child had been worse; but he did not know, until Miss Bessy dropped a casual remark, that she had not closed her own eyes that night. It was a week before he regained his own quarters, but an active week — indeed, on the whole, a rather pleasant week. For there was a delicate flattery in being domineered by a wholesome and handsome woman, and Mr. James North had by this time made up his mind that she was both. Once or twice he found himself contemplating her splendid figure with a recollection of the doctor's compliment, and later, emulating her own frankness, told her of it.

"And what did *you* say?"

"Oh, I laughed, and said — nothing."

And so did she.

A month after this interchange of frankness, she asked him if he could spend the next evening at her house. "You see," she said, "there 's to be a dance down at the hall at Eureka, and I have n't kicked a fut since last spring. Hank Fisher 's comin' up to take me over, and I 'm goin' to let the shanty slide for the night."

"But what 's to become of the baby?" asked North, a little testily.

"Well," said Miss Robinson, facing him somewhat aggressively, "I reckon it won't hurt ye to take care of it for a night. Dad can't — and if he could, he don't know how. Liked to have pizened me after mar died. No, young man, I don't propose to ask Hank Fisher to tote thet child over to Eureka and back, and spile his fun."

"Then I suppose I must make way for Mr. Hank — Hank — Fisher?" said North, with the least tinge of sarcasm in his speech.

"Of course. You 've got nothing else to do, you know."

North would have given worlds to have pleaded a previous engagement on business of importance, but he knew that Bessy spoke truly. He had nothing to do. "And Fisher has, I suppose?" he asked.

"Of course — to look after *me!*"

A more unpleasant evening James North had not spent since the first day of his solitude. He almost began to hate the unconscious cause of his absurd position, as he paced up and down the floor with it. "Was there ever such egregious folly?" he began; but remembering he was quoting Maria North's favorite résumé of his own conduct, he stopped. The child cried, missing, no doubt, the full rounded curves and plump arm of its nurse. North danced it violently, with an inward accompaniment that was not musical, and thought of the other dancers. "Doubtless,"

he mused, "she has told this beau of hers that she has left the baby with the 'looney' Man on the Beach. Perhaps I may be offered a permanent engagement as a harmless simpleton accustomed to the care of children. Mothers may cry for me. The doctor is at Eureka. Of course, he will be there to see his untranslated goddess, and condole with her over the imbecility of The Man on the Beach." Once he carelessly asked Joe who the company were.

"Well," said Joe mournfully, "thar's Widder Higsby and darter; the four Stubbs gals; in course Polly Doble will be on hand with that feller that's clerking over at the Head for Jones, and Jones's wife. Then thar's French Pete, and Whiskey Ben, and that chap that shot Archer, — I disremember his name, — and the barber — what's that little mulatto's name — that ar Kanaka? I swow!" continued Joe drearily, "I'll be forgettin' my own next — and" —

"That will do," interrupted North, only half concealing his disgust as he rose and carried the baby to the other room, beyond the reach of names that might shock its lady-like ears. The next morning he met the from-dance-returning Bessie abstractedly, and soon took his leave, full of a disloyal plan, conceived in the sleeplessness of her own bedchamber. He was satisfied that he owed a duty to its unknown parents to remove the child from the degrading influences of the barber Kanaka, and Hank Fisher especially, and he resolved to write to his relatives, stating the case, asking a home for the waif and assistance to find its parents. He addressed this letter to his cousin Maria, partly in consideration of the dramatic farewell of that young lady, and its possible influence in turning her susceptible heart towards his protégée. He then quietly settled back to his old solitary habits, and for a week left the Robinsons unvisited. The result was a morning call by Trinidad Joe on the hermit. "It's a whim of my gal's, Mr. North," he said dejectedly; "and ez I told you before and warned ye, when that gal hez

an idee, fower yoke of oxen and seving men can't drag it outer her. She 's got a idee o' larnin', — never hevin' hed much schoolin', and we on'y takin' the papers, permiskiss-like, — and she says *you* can teach her — not hevin' anythin' else to do. Do you folly me ? "

" Yes," said North, " certainly."

" Well, she allows ez mebbee you 're proud, and did n't like her takin' care of the baby for nowt; and she reckons that ef you 'll gin her some book larnin', and get her to sling some fancy talk in fash'n'ble style — why, she 'll call it squar."

" You can tell her," said North, very honestly, " that I shall be only too glad to help her in any way, without ever hoping to cancel my debt of obligation to her."

" Then it 's a go ? " said the mystified Joe, with a desperate attempt to convey the foregoing statement to his own intellect in three Saxon words.

" It 's a go," replied North cheerfully.

And he felt relieved. For he was not quite satisfied with his own want of frankness to her. But here was a way to pay off the debt he owed her, and yet retain his own dignity. And now he could tell her what he had done, and he trusted to the ambitious instinct that prompted her to seek a better education to explain his reasons for it.

He saw her that evening and confessed all to her frankly. She kept her head averted, but when she turned her blue eyes to him they were wet with honest tears. North had a man's horror of a ready feminine lachrymal gland; but it was not like Bessy to cry, and it meant something; and then she did it in a large, goddess-like way, without sniffling, or choking, or getting her nose red, but rather with a gentle deliquescence, a harmonious melting, so that he was fain to comfort her with nearer contact, gentleness in his own sad eyes, and a pressure of her large hand.

" It 's all right, I s'pose," she said sadly; " but I did n't

reckon on yer havin' any relations, but thought you was alone, like me."

James North, thinking of Hank Fisher and the "mullater," could not help intimating that his relations were very wealthy and fashionable people, and had visited him last summer. A recollection of the manner in which they had so visited him, and his own reception of them, prevented his saying more. But Miss Bessy could not forego a certain feminine curiosity, and asked, —

"Did they come with Sam Baker's team?"

"Yes."

"Last July?"

"Yes."

"And Sam drove the horses here for a bite?"

"I believe so."

"And them 's your relations?"

"They are."

Miss Robinson reached over the cradle and enfolded the sleeping infant in her powerful arms. Then she lifted her eyes, wrathful through her still glittering tears, and said, slowly, "They don't — have — this — child — then!"

"But why?"

"Oh, why? *I* saw them! That 's why, and enough! You can't play any such gay and festive skeletons on this poor baby for flesh and blood parents. No, sir!"

"I think you judge them hastily, Miss Bessy," said North, secretly amused; "my aunt may not, at first, favorably impress strangers, yet she has many friends. But surely you do not object to my cousin Maria, the young lady?"

"What! that dried cuttlefish, with nothing livin' about her but her eyes? James North, ye may be a fool like the old woman, — perhaps it 's in the family, — but ye ain't a devil like that gal! That ends it."

And it did. North dispatched a second letter to Maria, saying that he had already made other arrangements for the

baby. Pleased with her easy victory, Miss Bessy became more than usually gracious, and the next day bowed her shapely neck meekly to the yoke of her teacher, and became a docile pupil. James North could not have helped noticing her ready intelligence, even had he been less prejudiced in her favor than he was fast becoming now. If he had found it pleasant before to be admonished by her, there was still more delicious flattery in her perfect trust in his omniscient skill as a pilot over this unknown sea. There was a certain enjoyment in guiding her hand over the writing book, that I fear he could not have obtained from an intellect less graciously sustained by its physical nature. The weeks flew quickly by on gossamer wings, and when she placed a bunch of larkspurs and poppies in his hand one morning, he remembered for the first time that it was spring.

I cannot say that there was more to record of Miss Bessy's education than this. Once North, half jestingly, remarked that he had never yet seen her admirer, Mr. Hank Fisher. Miss Bessy (coloring, but cool): "You never will!" North (white, but hot): "Why?" Miss Bessy (faintly): "I'd rather not." (North resolutely): "I insist." Bessy (yielding): "As my teacher?" North (hesitatingly, at the limitation of the epithet): "Y-e-e-s!" Bessy: "And you'll promise never to speak of it again?" North: "Never." Bessy (slowly): "Well, he said I did an awful thing to go over to your cabin and stay." North (in the genuine simplicity of a refined nature): "But how?" Miss Bessy (half piqued, but absolutely admiring that nature): "Quit! and keep your promise!"

They were so happy in these new relations that it occurred to Miss Bessy one day to take James North to task for obliging her to ask to be his pupil. "You knew how ignorant I was," she added; and Mr. North retorted by relating to her the doctor's criticism on her independence.

"To tell you the truth," he added, "I was afraid you would not take it as kindly as he thought."

"That is, you thought me as vain as yourself. It seems to me you and the doctor had a great deal to say to each other."

"On the contrary," laughed North, "that was all we said."

"And you did n't make fun of me?"

Perhaps it was not necessary for North to take her hand to emphasize his denial, but he did.

Miss Bessy, being still reminiscent, perhaps did not notice it. "If it had n't been for that ar — I mean that thar — no, that baby — I would n't have known you!" she said dreamily.

"No," returned North mischievously, "but you still would have known Hank Fisher."

No woman is perfect. Miss Bessy looked at him with a sudden — her first and last — flash of coquetry. Then stooped and kissed — the baby.

James North was a simple gentleman, but not altogether a fool. He returned the kiss, but not vicariously.

There was a footstep on the porch. These two turned the hues of a dying dolphin, and then laughed. It was Joe. He held a newspaper in his hand. "I reckon ye woz right, Mr. North, about my takin' these yar papers reg'lar. For I allow here 's suthin' that may clar up the mystery o' that baby's parents." With the hesitation of a slowly grappling intellect, Joe sat down on the table and read from the San Francisco "Herald" as follows: "'It is now ascertained beyond doubt that the wreck reported by the "Æolus" was the American brig "Pompare," bound hence to Tahiti. The worst surmises are found correct. The body of the woman has been since identified as that of the beauti-ful daughter of — of — of — Terp — Terp — Terpish' — Well! I swow that name just tackles me."

"Gin it to me, dad," said Bessy pertly. "You never had any education, anyway. Hear your accomplished daughter." With a mock bow to the new schoolmaster, and a capital burlesque of a confident schoolgirl, she strode to the middle of the room, the paper held and folded book-wise in her hands. "Ahem! Where did you leave off? Oh, 'the beautiful daughter of Terpsichore — whose name was prom-i-nently connected with a mysterious social scandal of last year — the gifted but unfortunate Grace Chatterton' — No — don't stop me — there 's some more! 'The body of her child, a lovely infant of six months, has not been recovered, and it is supposed was washed overboard.' There! maybe that 's the child, Mr. North. Why, dad! Look, O my God! He 's falling. Catch him, dad! Quick!"

But her strong arm had anticipated her father's. She caught him, lifted him to the bed, on which he lay henceforth for many days unconscious. Then fever supervened, and delirium, and Dr. Duchesne telegraphed for his friends; but at the end of a week and the opening of a summer day the storm passed, as the other storm had passed, and he awoke, enfeebled, but at peace. Bessy was at his side — he was glad to see — alone. "Bessy, dear," he said hesitatingly, "when I am stronger I have something to tell you."

"I know it all, Jem," she said with a trembling lip; "I heard it all — no, not from *them*, but from your own lips in your delirium. I 'm glad it came from *you* — even then."

"Do you forgive me, Bessy?"

She pressed her lips to his forehead, and said hastily, and then falteringly, as if afraid of her impulse, —

"Yes — yes."

"And you will still be mother to the child?"

"*Her* child?"

"No, dear, not hers, but *mine!*"

She started, cried a little, and then putting her arms around him, said, "Yes."

And as there was but one way of fulfilling that sacred promise, they were married in the autumn.

ROGER CATRON'S FRIEND

I THINK that, from the beginning, we all knew how it would end. He had always been so quiet and conventional, although by nature an impulsive man; always so temperate and abstemious, although a man with a quick appreciation of pleasure; always so cautious and practical, although an imaginative man, that when, at last, one by one he loosed these bands, and gave himself up to a life perhaps not worse than other lives, which the world has accepted as the natural expression of their various owners, we at once decided that the case was a hopeless one. And when one night we picked him up out of the Union Ditch, a begrimed and weather-worn drunkard, a hopeless debtor, a self-confessed spendthrift, and a half-conscious maudlin imbecile, we knew that the end had come. The wife he had abandoned had in turn deserted him; the woman he had misled had already realized her folly, and left him with her reproaches; the associates of his reckless life, who had used and abused him, had found him no longer of service, or even amusement, and clearly there was nothing left to do but to hand him over to the State, and we took him to the nearest penitential asylum. Conscious of the Samaritan deed, we went back to our respective wives, and told his story. It is only just to say that these sympathetic creatures were more interested in the philanthropy of their respective husbands than in its miserable object. "It was good and kind in you, dear," said loving Mrs. Maston to her spouse, as returning home that night he flung his coat on a chair with an air of fatigued righteousness; "it was like your kind

heart to care for that beast; but after he left that good wife of his — that perfect saint — to take up with that awful woman, I think I 'd have left him to die in the ditch. Only to think of it, dear, a woman that you would n't speak to!" Here Mr. Maston coughed slightly, colored a little, mumbled something about "women not understanding some things," "that men were men," etc., and then went comfortably to sleep, leaving the outcast happily oblivious of all things, and especially this criticism, locked up in Hangtown jail.

For the next twelve hours he lay there, apathetic and half-conscious. Recovering from this after a while, he became furious, vengeful, and unmanageable, filling the cell and corridor with maledictions of friend and enemy; and again sullen, morose, and watchful. Then he refused food, and did not sleep, pacing his limits with the incessant feverish tread of a caged tiger. Two physicians, diagnosing his case from the scant facts, pronounced him insane, and he was accordingly transported to Sacramento. But on the way thither he managed to elude the vigilance of his guards, and escaped. The alarm was given, a hue and cry followed him, the best detectives of San Francisco were on his track, and finally recovered his dead body — emaciated and wasted by exhaustion and fever — in the Stanislaus Marshes, identified it, and, receiving the reward of $1000 offered by his surviving relatives and family, assisted in legally establishing the end we had predicted.

Unfortunately for the moral, the facts were somewhat inconsistent with the theory. A day or two after the remains were discovered and identified, the real body of "Roger Catron, aged fifty-two years, slight, iron-gray hair, and shabby in apparel," as the advertisement read, dragged itself, travel-worn, trembling, and disheveled, up the steep slope of Deadwood Hill. How he should do it he had long since determined — ever since he had hidden his derringer, a mere baby pistol, from the vigilance of his keepers. Where

he should do it, he had settled within his mind only within the last few moments. Deadwood Hill was seldom frequented; his body might lie there for months before it was discovered. He had once thought of the river, but he remembered it had an ugly way of exposing its secrets on sand-bar and shallow, and that the body of Whiskey Jim, bloated and disfigured almost beyond recognition, had been once delivered to the eyes of Sandy Bar, before breakfast, on the left bank of the Stanislaus. He toiled up through the chemisal that clothed the southern slope of the hill until he reached the bald, storm-scarred cap of the mountain, ironically decked with the picked, featherless plumes of a few dying pines. One, stripped of all but two lateral branches, brought a boyish recollection to his fevered brain. Against a background of dull sunset fire, it extended two gaunt arms — black, rigid, and pathetic. Calvary!

With the very word upon his lips, he threw himself, face downwards, on the ground beneath it, and, with his fingers clutched in the soil, lay there for some moments, silent and still. In this attitude, albeit a skeptic and unorthodox man, he prayed. I cannot say — indeed, I *dare* not say — that his prayer was heard, or that God visited him thus. Let us rather hope that all there was of God in him, in this crucial moment of agony and shame, strove outward and upward. Howbeit, when the moon rose he rose too, perhaps a trifle less steady than the planet, and began to descend the hill with feverish haste, yet with this marked difference between his present haste and his former recklessness, that it seemed to have a well-defined purpose. When he reached the road again, he struck into a well-worn trail, where, in the distance, a light faintly twinkled. Following this beacon, he kept on, and at last flung himself heavily against the door of the little cabin from whose window the light had shone. As he did so, it opened upon the figure of a square, thickset man, who, in the impetuosity of Catron's onset, received him, literally, in his arms.

"Captain Dick," said Roger Catron hoarsely, — "Captain Dick, save me! For God's sake, save me!"

Captain Dick, without a word, placed a large, protecting hand upon Catron's shoulder, allowed it to slip to his waist, and then drew his visitor quietly, but firmly, within the cabin. Yet, in the very movement, he had managed to gently and unobtrusively possess himself of Catron's pistol.

"Save ye! From which?" asked Captain Dick, as quietly and unobtrusively dropping the derringer in a flour sack.

"From everything," gasped Catron; "from the men that are hounding me, from my family, from my friends, but most of all — from, from — myself!"

He had, in turn, grasped Captain Dick, and forced him frenziedly against the wall. The Captain released himself, and, taking the hands of his excited visitor, said slowly, —

"Ye want some blue mass — suthin' to onload your liver. I 'll get it up for ye."

"But, Captain Dick, I 'm an outcast, shamed, disgraced" —

"Two on them pills taken now, and two in the morning," continued the Captain gravely, rolling a bolus in his fingers, "will bring yer head to the wind again. Yer fallin' to leeward all the time, and ye want to brace up."

"But, Captain," continued the agonized man, again clutching the sinewy arms of his host, and forcing his livid face and fixed eyes within a few inches of Captain Dick's; "hear me! You must and shall hear me. I 've been in jail — do you hear? — in jail, like a common felon. I 've been sent to the asylum, like a demented pauper. I 've" —

"Two now, and two in the morning," continued the Captain quietly, releasing one hand only to place two enormous pills in the mouth of the excited Catron. "Thar now — a drink o' whiskey — thar, that 'll do — just enough to take

the taste out of yer mouth, wash it down, and belay it, so to speak. And how are the mills running, gin'rally, over at the Bar?"

"Captain Dick, hear me — if you *are* my friend, for God's sake hear me! An hour ago I should have been a dead man" —

"They say that Sam Bolin hez sold out of the 'Excelsior'" —

"Captain Dick! Listen, for God's sake; I have suffered" —

But Captain Dick was engaged in critically examining his man. "I guess I 'll ladle ye out some o' that soothin' mixture I bought down at Simpson's t' other day," he said reflectively. "And I onderstood the boys up on the Bar thinks the rains will set in airly."

But here Nature was omnipotent. Worn by exhaustion, excitement, and fever, and possibly a little affected by Captain Dick's later potion, Roger Catron turned white, and lapsed against the wall. In an instant Captain Dick had caught him, as a child, lifted him in his stalwart arms, wrapped a blanket around him, and deposited him in his bunk. Yet, even in his prostration, Catron made one more despairing appeal for mental sympathy from his host.

"I know I 'm sick — dying, perhaps," he gasped, from under the blankets; "but promise me, whatever comes, tell my wife — say to" —

"It has been lookin' consid'ble like rain, lately, here abouts," continued the Captain coolly, in a kind of amphibious slang, characteristic of the man; "but in these yer latitudes no man kin set up to be a weather-sharp."

"Captain! will you hear me?"

"Yer goin' to sleep now," said the Captain potentially.

"But, Captain, they are pursuing me! If they should track me here?"

"Thar is a rifle over thar, and yer 's my navy revolver.

When I've emptied them, and want you to bear a hand I'll call ye. Just now your lay is to turn in. It's my watch."

There was something so positive, strong, assuring, and a little awesome in the Captain's manner that the trembling, nervously prostrated man beneath the blankets forbore to question further. In a few minutes his breathing, albeit hurried and irregular, announced that he slept. The Captain then arose, for a moment critically examined the sleeping man, holding his head a little on one side, whistling softly, and stepping backwards to get a good perspective, but always with contemplative good humor, as if Catron were a work of art, which he (the Captain) had created, yet one that he was not yet entirely satisfied with. Then he put a large pea-jacket over his flannel blouse, dragged a Mexican *serape* from the corner, and putting it over his shoulders, opened the cabin door, sat down on the doorstep, and leaning back against the doorpost, composed himself to meditation. The moon lifted herself slowly over the crest of Deadwood Hill, and looked down, not unkindly, on his broad, white, shaven face, round and smooth as her own disc, encircled with a thin fringe of white hair and whiskers. Indeed, he looked so like the prevailing caricatures in a comic almanac of planets, with dimly outlined features, that the moon would have been quite justified in flirting with him, as she clearly did, insinuating a twinkle into his keen, gray eyes, making the shadow of a dimple on his broad, fat chin, and otherwise idealizing him after the fashion of her hero-worshiping sex. Touched by these benign influences, Captain Dick presently broke forth in melody. His song was various, but chiefly, I think, confined to the recital of the exploits of one "Lorenzo," who, as related by himself —

> "Shipped on board of a Liner,
> 'Renzo, boys, 'Renzo," —

a fact that seemed to have deprived him at once of all metre, grammar, or even the power of coherent narrative. At times a groan or a half-articulate cry would come from the "bunk" whereon Roger Catron lay, — a circumstance that always seemed to excite Captain Dick to greater effort and more rapid vocalization. Toward morning, in the midst of a prolonged howl from the Captain, who was finishing the "Starboard Watch, Ahoy!" in three different keys, Roger Catron's voice broke suddenly and sharply from his enwrappings, —

"Dry up, you d—d old fool, will you?"

Captain Dick stopped instantly. Rising to his feet, and looking over the landscape, he took all Nature into his confidence in one inconceivably arch and crafty wink. "He's coming up to the wind," he said softly, rubbing his hands. "The pills is fetchin' him. Steady now, boys, steady. Steady as she goes on her course," and with another wink of ineffable wisdom, he entered the cabin and locked the door.

Meanwhile, the best society of Sandy Bar was kind to the newly made widow. Without being definitely expressed, it was generally felt that sympathy with her was now safe, and carried no moral responsibility with it. Even practical and pecuniary aid, which before had been withheld, lest it should be diverted from its proper intent, and perhaps, through the weakness of the wife, made to minister to the wickedness of the husband — even that was now openly suggested. Everybody felt that somebody should do something for the widow. A few did it. Her own sex rallied to her side, generally with large sympathy, but, unfortunately, small pecuniary or practical result. At last, when the feasibility of her taking a boarding-house in San Francisco, and identifying herself with that large class of American gentlewomen who have seen better days, but clearly

are on the road never to see them again, was suggested, a few of her own and her husband's rich relatives came to the front to rehabilitate her. It was easier to take her into their homes as an equal, than to refuse to call upon her as the mistress of a lodging-house in the adjoining street. And upon inspection it was found that she was still quite an eligible *partie*, prepossessing, and withal, in her widow's weeds, a kind of poetical and sentimental presence, as necessary in a wealthy and fashionable American family as a work of art. "Yes, poor Caroline has had a sad, sad history," the languid Mrs. Walker Catron would say, "and we all sympathize with her deeply; Walker always regards her as a sister." What was this dark history never came out, but its very mystery always thrilled the visitor, and seemed to indicate plainly the respectability of the hostess. An American family without a genteel skeleton in its closet could scarcely add to that gossip which keeps society from forgetting its members. Nor was it altogether unnatural that presently Mrs. Roger Catron lent herself to this sentimental deception, and began to think that she really was a more exquisitely aggrieved woman than she imagined. At times, when this vague load of iniquity put upon her dead husband assumed, through the mystery of her friends, the rumor of murder and highway robbery, and even an attempt upon her own life, she went to her room, a little frightened, and had "a good cry," reappearing more mournful and pathetic than ever, and corroborating the suspicions of her friends. Indeed, one or two impulsive gentlemen, fired by her pathetic eyelids, openly regretted that the deceased had not been hanged; to which Mrs. Walker Catron responded that, "Thank Heaven, they were spared at least that disgrace!" and so sent conviction into the minds of her hearers.

It was scarcely two months after this painful close of her matrimonial life that one rainy February morning the

servant brought a card to Mrs. Roger Catron, bearing the following inscription: —

"Richard Graeme Macleod."

Women are more readily affected by names than we are, and there was a certain Highland respectability about this that, albeit not knowing its possessor, impelled Mrs. Catron to send word that she "would be down in a few moments." At the end of this femininely indefinite period — a quarter of an hour by the French clock on the mantlepiece — Mrs. Roger Catron made her appearance in the reception-room. It was a dull, wet day, as I have said before, but on the Contra Costa hills the greens and a few flowers were already showing a promise of rejuvenescence and an early spring. There was something of this, I think, in Mrs. Catron's presence, shown perhaps in the coquettish bow of a ribbon, in a larger and more delicate ruche, in a tighter belting of her black cashmere gown; but still there was a suggestion of recent rain in the eyes, and threatening weather. As she entered the room, the sun came out, too, and revealed the prettiness and delicacy of her figure, and I regret to state, also, the somewhat obtrusive plainness of her visitor.

"I knew ye 'd be sorter disapp'inted at first, not gettin' the regular bearings o' my name, but I 'm 'Captain Dick.' Mebbee ye 've heard your husband — that is, your husband ez waz, Roger Catron — speak o' me?"

Mrs. Catron, feeling herself outraged and deceived in belt, ruche, and ribbon, freezingly admitted that she had heard of him before.

"In course," said the Captain; "why, Lord love ye, Mrs. Catron — ez waz — he used to be all the time talkin' of ye. And allers in a free, easy, confidential way. Why, one night — don't ye remember? — when he came home, carryin', mebbee, more canvas than was seamanlike, and you shet him out the house, and laid for him with a broomstick, or one o' them crokay mallets, I disremember which, and

he kem over to me, ole Captain Dick, and I sez to him, sez I, 'Why, Roger, them 's only love pats, and yer condishun is such ez to make any woman mad-like.' Why, Lord bless ye! there ain't enny of them mootool differences you and him hed ez I does n't knows on, and did n't always stand by, and lend ye a hand, and heave in a word or two of advice when called on."

Mrs. Catron, ice everywhere but in her pink cheeks, was glad that Mr. Catron seemed to have always a friend to whom he confided *everything*, even the base falsehoods he had invented.

"Mebbee now they *waz* falsehoods," said the Captain thoughtfully. "But don't ye go to think," he added conscientiously, "that he kept on that tack all the time. Why that day he made a raise, gambling, I think, over at Dutch Flat, and give ye them bracelets — regular solid gold — why, it would have done your heart good to have heard him talk about you — said you had the prettiest arm in Californy. Well," said the Captain, looking around for a suitable climax, — "well, you 'd have thought that he was sorter proud of ye! Why, I woz with him in 'Frisco when he bought that A 1 prize bonnet for ye for $75, and not hevin' over $50 in his pocket, borryed the other $25 outer me. Mebbee it was a little fancy for a bonnet; but I allers thought he took it a little too much to heart when you swopped it off for that Dollar Varden dress, just because that Lawyer Maxwell said the Dollar Vardens was becomin' to ye. Ye know, I reckon, he was always sorter jealous of that thar shark" —

"May I venture to ask what your business is with me?" interrupted Mrs. Catron sharply.

"In course," said the Captain, rising. "Ye see," he said apologetically, "we got to talking o' Roger and ole times, and I got a little out o' my course. It 's a matter of" — he began to fumble in his pockets, and finally pro-

duced a small memorandum-book, which he glanced over — "it 's a matter of $250."

"I don't understand you," said Mrs. Catron, in indignant astonishment.

"On the 15th of July," said the Captain, consulting his memorandum-book, "Roger sold his claim at Nye's Ford for $1500. Now, le' 's see. Thar was nigh on $350 ez he admitted to me he lost at poker, and we 'll add $50 to that for treating, supper, and drinks gin'rally — put Roger down for $400. Then there was *you*. Now you spent $250 on your trip to 'Frisco thet summer; then $200 went for them presents you sent your Aunt Jane, and thar was $400 for house expenses. Well, thet foots up $1250. Now, what 's become of thet other $250?"

Mrs. Catron's woman's impulse to retaliate sharply overcame her first natural indignation at her visitor's impudence. Therein she lost, womanlike, her vantage.

"Perhaps the woman he fled with can tell you," she said savagely.

"Thet," said the Captain slowly, "is a good, a reasonable idee. But it ain't true; from all I can gather *she* lent *him* money. It did n't go *thar*."

"Roger Catron left me penniless," said Mrs. Catron hotly.

"Thet 's jist what gets me. You oughter have $250 somewhar lying round."

Mrs. Catron saw her error. "May I ask what right you have to question me? If you have any, I must refer you to my lawyer or my brother-in-law; if you have none, I hope you will not oblige me to call the servants to put you from the house."

"Thet sounds reasonable and square, too," said the Captain thoughtfully. "I've a power of attorney from Roger Catron to settle up his affairs and pay his debts, given a week afore them detectives handed ye over his

dead body. But I thought that you and me might save lawyer's fees and all fuss and feathers, ef, in a sociable, sad-like way — lookin' back sorter on Roger ez you and me once knew him — we had a quiet talk together."

"Good-morning, sir," said Mrs. Catron, rising stiffly. The Captain hesitated a moment; a slight flush of color came in his face as he at last rose as the lady backed out of the room. "Good-morning, ma'am," said the Captain, and departed.

Very little was known of this interview except the general impression in the family that Mrs. Catron had successfully resisted a vague attempt at blackmail from one of her husband's former dissolute companions. Yet it is only fair to say that Mrs. Catron snapped up, quite savagely, two male sympathizers on this subject, and cried a good deal for two days afterward, and once, in the hearing of her sister-in-law, to that lady's great horror, "wished she was dead."

A week after this interview, as Lawyer Phillips sat in his office, he was visited by Macleod. Recognizing, possibly, some practical difference between the widow and the lawyer, Captain Dick this time first produced his credentials, — a "power of attorney." "I need not tell you," said Phillips, "that the death of your principal renders this instrument invalid, and I suppose you know that, leaving no will and no property, his estate has not been administered upon."

"Mebbee it is, and mebbee it isn't. But I hain't askin' for anythin' but information. There was a bit o' prop'ty and a mill onto it, over at Heavytree, ez sold for $10,000. I don't see," said the Captain, consulting his memorandum-book, "ez *he* got anything out of it."

"It was mortgaged for $7000," said the lawyer quickly, "and the interest and fees amount to about $3000 more."

"The mortgage was given as security for a note?"

"Yes, a gambling debt," said the lawyer sharply.

"Thet's so, and my belief ez that it was n't a square game. He should n't hev given no note. Why, don't ye mind, 'way back in '60, when you and me waz in Marysville, that night that you bucked agin faro, and lost seving hundred dollars, and then refoosed to take up your checks, saying it was a fraud and gambling debt? And don't ye mind when that chap kicked ye, and I helped to drag him off ye — and" —

"I 'm busy now, Mr. Macleod," said Phillips hastily; "my clerk will give you all the information you require. Good-morning."

"It 's mighty queer," said the Captain thoughtfully, as he descended the stairs, "but the moment the conversation gets limber and sociable-like, and I gets to runnin' free under easy sail, it 's always 'Good-morning, Captain,' and we 're becalmed."

By some occult influence, however, all the foregoing conversation, slightly exaggerated, and the whole interview of the Captain with the widow, with sundry additions, became the common property of Sandy Bar, to the great delight of the boys. There was scarcely a person who had ever had business or social relation with Roger Catron, whom "The Frozen Truth," as Sandy Bar delighted to designate the Captain, had not "interviewed," as simply and directly. It is said that he closed a conversation with one of the San Francisco detectives, who had found Roger Catron's body, in these words: "And now hevin' got throo bizness, I was goin' to ask ye what 's gone of Mat Jones, who was with ye in the bush in Austraily. Lord, how he got me quite interested in ye, telling me how you and him got out on a ticket-of-leave, and was chased by them milishy guards, and at last swam out to a San Francisco bark and escaped;" but here the inevitable pressure of previous business always stopped the Captain's conversational flow. The natural

result of this was a singular reaction in favor of the late Roger Catron in the public sentiment of Sandy Bar, so strong, indeed, as to induce the Rev. Mr. Joshua M'Snagly, the next Sunday, to combat it with the moral of Catron's life. After the service, he was approached in the vestibule, and in the hearing of some of his audience, by Captain Dick, with the following compliment: "In many p'ints ye hed jess got Roger Catron down to a hair. I knew ye'd do it. Why, Lord love ye, you and him had p'ints in common; and when he giv' ye that hundred dollars arter the fire in Sacramento, to help ye rebuild the parsonage, he said to me — me not likin' ye on account o' my being on the committee that invited ye to resign from Marysville all along o' that affair with Deacon Pursell's darter; and a piece she was, parson! eh? — well, Roger, he ups and sez to me, 'Every man hez his faults,' sez he; and, sez he, 'there 's no reason why a parson ain't a human being like us, and that gal o' Pursell 's is pizen, ez I know.' So ye see, I seed that ye was hittin' yourself over Catron's shoulder, like them early martyrs." But here, as Captain Dick was clearly blocking up all egress from the church, the sexton obliged him to move on, and again he was stopped in his conversational career.

But only for a time. Before long, it was whispered that Captain Dick had ordered a meeting of the creditors, debtors, and friends of Roger Catron at Robinson's Hall. It was suggested, with some show of reason, that this had been done at the instigation of various practical jokers of Sandy Bar, who had imposed on the simple directness of the Captain, and the attendance that night certainly indicated something more than a mere business meeting. All of Sandy Bar crowded into Robinson's Hall, and long before Captain Dick made his appearance on the platform, with his inevitable memorandum-book, every inch of floor was crowded.

The Captain began to read the expenditures of Roger Catron with relentless fidelity of detail. The several losses by poker, the whiskey bills, and the record of a "jamboree" at Tooley's, the vague expenses whereof footed up $275, were received with enthusiastic cheers by the audience. A single milliner's bill for $125 was hailed with delight; $100 expended in treating the Vestal Virgin Combination Troupe almost canonized his memory; $50 for a simple ouggy ride with Deacon Fisk brought down the house; $500 advanced, without security and unpaid, for the electioneering expenses of Assemblyman Jones, who had recently introduced a bill to prevent gambling and the sale of lager beer on Sundays, was received with an ominous groan. One or two other items of money loaned occasioned the withdrawal of several gentlemen from the audience amidst the hisses or ironical cheers of the others.

At last Captain Dick stopped and advanced to the footlights.

"Gentlemen and friends," he said slowly; "I foots up $25,000 as Roger Catron hez *made*, fa'r and square, in this yer county. I foots up $27,000 ez he has *spent* in this yer county. I puts it to you ez men — fa'r-minded men — ef this man was a pauper and debtor? I put it to you ez fa'r-minded men — ez free and easy men — ez political economists — ez this the kind of men to impoverish a county?"

An overwhelming and instantaneous "No!" almost drowned the last utterance of the speaker.

"Thar is only one item," said Captain Dick slowly, "only one item, that ez men — ez fa'r-minded men — ez political economists — it seems to me we hez the right to question. It 's this: Thar is an item, read to you by me, of $2000 paid to certing San Francisco detectives, paid out o' the assets o' Roger Catron, for the finding of Roger Catron's body. Gentlemen of Sandy Bar and friends, *I* found that body, and yer it is!"

And Roger Catron, a little pale and nervous, but palpably in the flesh, stepped upon the platform.

Of course the newspapers were full of it the next day. Of course, in due time, it appeared as a garbled and romantic item in the San Francisco press. Of course Mrs. Catron, on reading it, fainted, and for two days said that this last cruel blow ended all relations between her husband and herself. On the third day she expressed her belief that, if he had had the slightest feeling for her he would long since, for the sake of mere decency, have communicated with her. On the fourth day she thought she had been, perhaps, badly advised, had an open quarrel with her relatives, and intimated that a wife had certain obligations, etc. On the sixth day, still not hearing from him, she quoted Scripture, spoke of a seventy-times-seven forgiveness, and went generally into mild hysterics. On the seventh, she left in the morning train for Sandy Bar.

And really I don't know as I have anything more to tell, I dined with them recently, and, upon my word, a more decorous, correct, conventional, and dull dinner I never ate in my life.

"JINNY"

I THINK that the few who were permitted to know and love the object of this sketch spent the rest of their days, not only in an attitude of apology for having at first failed to recognize her higher nature, but of remorse that they should have ever lent a credulous ear to *a priori* tradition concerning her family characteristics. She had not escaped that calumny which she shared with the rest of her sex for those youthful follies, levities, and indiscretions which belong to immaturity. It is very probable that the firmness that distinguished her maturer will in youth might have been taken for obstinacy, that her nice discrimination might at the same period have been taken for adolescent caprice, and that the positive expression of her quick intellect might have been thought youthful impertience before her years had won respect for her judgment.

She was foaled at Indian Creek, and one month later, when she was brought over to Sawyer's Bar, was considered the smallest donkey ever seen in the foothills. The legend that she was brought over in one of "Dan the Quartz Crusher's" boots required corroboration from that gentleman; but his denial being evidently based upon a masculine vanity regarding the size of his foot rather than a desire to be historically accurate, it went for nothing. It is certain that for the next two months she occupied the cabin of Dan, until, perhaps incensed at this and other scandals, she one night made her way out. "I had n't the least idee wot woz comin'," said Dan; "but about midnight I seemed to hear hail onto the roof, and a shower of rocks and stones

like to a blast started in the cañon. When I got up and struck a light, thar was suthin' like onto a cord o' kindlin' wood and splinters whar she 'd stood asleep, and a hole in the side o' the shanty, and — no Jinny! Lookin' at them hoofs o' hern — and mighty porty they is to look at, too — you would allow she could do it!" I fear that this performance laid the foundation of her later infelicitous reputation, and perhaps awakened in her youthful breast a misplaced ambition, and an emulation which might at that time have been diverted into a nobler channel. For the fame of this juvenile performance — and its possible promise in the future — brought at once upon her the dangerous flattery and attention of the whole camp. Under intelligently directed provocation she would repeat her misguided exercise, until most of the scanty furniture of the cabin was reduced to a hopeless wreck, and sprains and callosities were developed upon the limbs of her admirers. Yet even at this early stage of her history, that penetrating intellect which was in after years her dominant quality was evident to all. She could not be made to kick at quartz tailings, at a barrel of Boston crackers, or at the head or shin of "Nigger Pete." An artistic discrimination economized her surplus energy. "Ef you 'll notiss," said Dan, with a large parental softness, "she never lets herself out to onst like them mules or any jackass ez I 've heerd of, but kinder holds herself in, and, so to speak, takes her bearings — sorter feels round gently with that off foot, takes her distance and her rest, and then with that ar foot hoverin' round in the air softly, like an angel's wing, and a gentle, dreamy kind o' look in them eyes, she lites out! Don't ye, Jinny? Thar! jist ez I told ye," continued Dan, with an artist's noble forgetfulness of self, as he slowly crawled from the splintered ruin of the barrel on which he had been sitting. "Thar! did ye ever see the like? Did ye dream that all the while I was talkin' she was a-meditatin' that?"

The same artistic perception and noble reticence distinguished her bray. It was one of which a less sagacious animal would have been foolishly vain or ostentatiously prodigal. It was a contralto of great compass and profundity — reaching from a low G to high C — perhaps a trifle stronger in the lower register, and not altogether free from a nasal falsetto in the upper. Daring and brilliant as it was in the middle notes, it was perhaps more musically remarkable for its great sustaining power. The element of surprise always entered into the hearer's enjoyment; long after any ordinary strain of human origin would have ceased, faint echoes of Jinny's last note were perpetually recurring. But it was as an intellectual and moral expression that her bray was perfect. As far beyond her size as were her aspirations, it was a free and running commentary of scorn at all created things extant, with ironical and sardonic additions that were terrible. It reviled all human endeavor, it quenched all sentiments, it suspended frivolity, it scattered reverie, it paralyzed action. It was omnipotent. More wonderful and characteristic than all, the very existence of this tremendous organ was unknown to the camp for six months after the arrival of its modest owner, and only revealed to them under circumstances that seemed to point more conclusively than ever to her rare discretion.

It was the beginning of a warm night and the middle of a heated political discussion. Sawyer's Bar had gathered in force at the Crossing, and by the light of flaring pine torches, cheered and applauded the rival speakers who from a rude platform addressed the excited multitude. Partisan spirit at that time ran high in the foothills; crimination and recrimination, challenge, reply, accusation, and retort had already inflamed the meeting, and Colonel Bungstarter, after a withering review of his opponent's policy, culminated with a personal attack upon the career and private character of the eloquent and chivalrous Colonel Culpepper

Starbottle of Siskiyou. That eloquent and chivalrous gentleman was known to be present; it was rumored that the attack was expected to provoke a challenge from Colonel Starbottle which would give Bungstarter the choice of weapons, and deprive Starbottle of his advantage as a deadshot. It was whispered also that the sagacious Starbottle, aware of this fact, would retaliate in kind so outrageously as to leave Bungstarter no recourse but to demand satisfaction on the spot. As Colonel Starbottle rose, the eager crowd drew together, elbowing each other in rapt and ecstatic expectancy. "He can't get even on Bungstarter, onless he allows his sister ran off with a nigger, or that he put up his grandmother at draw-poker and lost her," whispered the Quartz Crusher; "kin he?" All ears were alert, particularly the very long and hairy ones just rising above the railing of the speaker's platform; for Jinny, having a feminine distrust of solitude and a fondness for show, had followed her master to the meeting, and had insinuated herself upon the platform, where way was made for her with that frontier courtesy always extended to her age and sex.

Colonel Starbottle, stertorous and purple, advanced to the railing. There he unbuttoned his collar and laid his neckcloth aside; then with his eye fixed on his antagonist he drew off his blue frock-coat, and thrusting one hand into his ruffled shirt-front, and raising the other to the dark canopy above him, he opened his vindictive lips. The action, the attitude, were Starbottle's. But the voice was not. For at that supreme moment, a bray — so profound, so appalling, so utterly soul-subduing, so paralyzing that everything else sank to mere insignificance beside it — filled woods and sky and air. For a moment only the multitude gasped in speechless astonishment, — it was a moment only, — and then the welkin roared with their shouts. In vain silence was commanded, in vain Colonel Starbottle, with a

ghastly smile, remarked that he recognized in the interruption the voice and intellect of the opposition; the laugh continued, the more as it was discovered that Jinny had not yet finished, and was still recurring to her original theme. "Gentlemen," gasped Starbottle, "any attempt by [Hee-haw! from Jinny] brutal buffoonery to restrict the right of free speech to all [a prolonged assent from Jinny] is worthy only the dastardly" — but here a diminuendo so long drawn as to appear a striking imitation of the Colonel's own apoplectic sentences drowned his voice with shrieks of laughter.

It must not be supposed that during this performance a vigorous attempt was not made to oust Jinny from the platform. But all in vain. Equally demoralizing in either extremity, Jinny speedily cleared a circle with her flying hoofs, smashed the speaker's table and water pitcher, sent the railing flying in fragments over the cheering crowd, and only succumbed to two blankets, in which, with her head concealed, she was finally dragged, half captive, half victor, from the field. Even then a muffled and supplemental bray that came from the woods at intervals drew half the crowd away and reduced the other half to mere perfunctory hearers. The demoralized meeting was adjourned; Colonel Starbottle's withering reply remained unuttered, and the Bungstarter party were triumphant.

For the rest of the evening Jinny was the heroine of the hour, but no cajolery nor flattery could induce her to again exhibit her powers. In vain did Dean of Angel's extemporize a short harangue in the hope that Jinny would be tempted to reply; in vain was every provocation offered that might sting her sensitive nature to eloquent revolt. She replied only with her heels. Whether or not this was simple caprice, or whether she was satisfied with her maiden effort, or indignant at her subsequent treatment, she remained silent. "She made her little game," said Dan,

who was a political adherent of Starbottle's, and who yet from that day enjoyed the great speaker's undying hatred; "and even if me and her don't agree on politics — *you* let her alone." Alas, it would have been well for Dan if he could have been true to his instincts, but the offer of one hundred dollars from the Bungstarter party proved too tempting. She passed irrevocably from his hands into those of the enemy. But any reader of these lines will, I trust, rejoice to hear that this attempt to restrain free political expression in the foothills failed signally. For, although she was again covertly introduced on the platform by the Bungstarters, and placed face to face with Colonel Starbottle at Murphy's Camp, she was dumb. Even a brass band failed to excite her emulation. Either she had become disgusted with politics, or the higher prices paid by the party to other and less effective speakers aroused her jealousy and shocked her self-esteem, but she remained a passive spectator. When the Hon. Sylvester Rourback, who received, for the use of his political faculties for a single night, double the sum for which she was purchased outright, appeared on the same platform with herself, she forsook it hurriedly and took to the woods. Here she might have starved but for the intervention of one M'Carty, a poor market-gardener, who found her, and gave her food and shelter under the implied contract that she should forsake politics and go to work. The latter she for a long time resisted, but as she was considered large enough by this time to draw a cart, M'Carty broke her to single harness, with a severe fracture of his leg and the loss of four teeth and a small spring wagon. At length, when she could be trusted to carry his wares to Murphy's Camp, and could be checked from entering a shop with the cart attached to her — a fact of which she always affected perfect disbelief — her education was considered as complete as that of the average Californian donkey. It was still unsafe

to leave her alone, as she disliked solitude, and always made it a point to join any group of loungers with her unnecessary cart, and even to follow some good-looking miner to his cabin. The first time this peculiarity was discovered by her owner was on his return to the street after driving a bargain within the walls of the Temperance Hotel. Jinny was nowhere to be seen. Her devious course, however, was pleasingly indicated by vegetables that strewed the road until she was at last tracked to the veranda of the Arcade saloon, where she was found looking through the window at a game of euchre, and only deterred by the impeding cart from entering the building. A visit one Sunday to the little Catholic chapel at French Camp, where she attempted to introduce an antiphonal service and the cart, brought shame and disgrace upon her unlucky master. For the cart contained freshly gathered vegetables, and the fact that M'Carty had been Sabbath-breaking was painfully evident. Father Sullivan was quick to turn an incident that provoked only the risibilities of his audience into a moral lesson. "It 's the poor dumb beast that has a more Christian sowl than Michael," he commented; but here Jinny assented so positively that they were fain to drag her away by main force.

To her eccentric and thoughtless youth succeeded a calm maturity, in which her conservative sagacity was steadily developed. She now worked for her living, subject, however, to a nice discrimination by which she limited herself to a certain amount of work, beyond which neither threats, beatings, nor cajoleries would force her. At certain hours she would start for the stable with or without the incumbrances of the cart or Michael, turning two long and deaf ears on all expostulation or entreaty. "Now, God be good to me," said Michael, one day, picking himself out from a ditch as he gazed sorrowfully after the flying heels of Jinny, "but it 's only the second load of cabbages I 'm bringin' the day,

and if she 's shtruck *now*, it 's ruined I am entoirely." But he was mistaken; after two hours of rumination Jinny returned of her own free will, having evidently mistaken the time, and it is said even consented to draw an extra load to make up the deficiency. It may be imagined from this and other circumstances that Michael stood a little in awe of Jinny's superior intellect, and that Jinny occasionally, with the instinct of her sex, presumed upon it. After the Sunday episode, already referred to, she was given her liberty on that day, a privilege she gracefully recognized by somewhat unbending her usual austerity in the indulgence of a saturnine humor. She would visit the mining camps, and, grazing lazily and thoughtfully before the cabins, would, by various artifices and coquetries known to the female heart, induce some credulous stranger to approach her with the intention of taking a ride. She would submit hesitatingly to a halter, allow him to mount her back, and, with every expression of timid and fearful reluctance, at last permit him to guide her in a laborious trot out of sight of human habitation. What happened then was never clearly known. In a few moments the camp would be aroused by shouts and execrations, and the spectacle of Jinny tearing by at a frightful pace, with the stranger clinging with his arms around her neck, afraid to slip off, from terror of her circumvolving heels, and vainly imploring assistance. Again and again she would dash by the applauding groups, adding the aggravation of her voice to the danger of her heels, until, suddenly wheeling, she would gallop to Carter's Pond and deposit her luckless freight in the muddy ditch. This practical joke was repeated until one Sunday she was approached by Juan Ramirez, a Mexican *vaquero*, booted and spurred, and carrying a *riata*. A crowd was assembled to see her discomfiture. But, to the intense disappointment of the camp, Jinny, after quietly surveying the stranger, uttered a sardonic bray, and ambled

away to the little cemetery on the hill, whose tangled chaparral effectually prevented all pursuit by her skilled antagonist. From that day she forsook the camp, and spent her Sabbaths in mortuary reflection among the pine head-boards and cold "*hic jacets*" of the dead.

Happy would it have been if this circumstance, which resulted in the one poetic episode of her life, had occurred earlier; for the cemetery was the favorite resort of Miss Jessie Lawton, a gentle invalid from San Francisco, who had sought the foothills for the balsam of pine and fir, and in the faint hope that the freshness of the wind roses might call back her own. The extended views from the cemetery satisfied Miss Lawton's artistic taste, and here frequently, with her sketch-book in hand, she indulged that taste and a certain shy reserve which kept her from contact with strangers. On one of the leaves of that sketch-book appears a study of a donkey's head, being none other than the grave features of Jinny, as once projected timidly over the artist's shoulder. The preliminaries of this intimacy have never transpired, nor is it a settled fact if Jinny made the first advances. The result was only known to the men of Sawyer's Bar by a vision which remained fresh in their memories long after the gentle lady and her four-footed friend had passed beyond their voices. As two of the tunnel-men were returning from work one evening, they chanced to look up the little trail, kept sacred from secular intrusion, that led from the cemetery to the settlement. In the dim twilight, against a sunset sky, they beheld a pale-faced girl riding slowly toward them. With a delicate instinct, new to these rough men, they drew closer in the shadow of the bushes until she passed. There was no mistaking the familiar grotesqueness of Jinny; there was no mistaking the languid grace of Miss Lawton. But a wreath of wild roses was around Jinny's neck, from her long ears floated Miss Jessie's hat ribbons, and a mischievous, girlish

smile was upon Miss Jessie's face, as fresh as the azaleas in her hair. By the next day the story of this gentle apparition was known to a dozen miners in camp, and all were sworn to secrecy. But the next evening, and the next, from the safe shadows of the woods they watched and drank in the beauty of that fanciful and all unconscious procession. They kept their secret, and never a whisper or footfall from these rough men broke its charm or betrayed their presence. The man who could have shocked the sensitive reserve of the young girl would have paid for it with his life.

And then one day the character of the procession changed, and this little incident having been told, it was permitted that Jinny should follow her friend, caparisoned even as before, but this time by the rougher but no less loving hands of men. When the cortège reached the ferry where the dead girl was to begin her silent journey to the sea, Jinny broke from those who held her, and after a frantic effort to mount the barge fell into the swiftly rushing Stanislaus. A dozen stout arms were stretched to save her, and a rope, skillfully thrown, was caught around her feet. For an instant she was passive, and, as it seemed, saved. But the next moment her dominant instinct returned, and with one stroke of her powerful heel she snapped the rope in twain and so drifted with her mistress to the sea.

TWO SAINTS OF THE FOOT-HILLS

It never was clearly ascertained how long they had been there. The first settler of Rough-and-Ready — one Low, playfully known to his familiars as "The Poor Indian" — declared that the Saints were afore his time, and occupied a cabin in the brush when he "blazed" his way to the North Fork. It is certain that the two were present when the water was first turned on the Union Ditch, and then and there received the designation of Daddy Downey and Mammy Downey, which they kept to the last. As they tottered toward the refreshment tent, they were welcomed with the greatest enthusiasm by the boys; or, to borrow the more refined language of the "Union Recorder," "Their gray hairs and bent figures, recalling as they did the happy paternal eastern homes of the spectators, and the blessings that fell from venerable lips when they left those homes to journey in quest of the Golden Fleece on Occidental Slopes, caused many to burst into tears." The nearer facts, that many of these spectators were orphans, that a few were unable to establish any legal parentage whatever, that others had enjoyed a State's guardianship and discipline, and that a majority had left their parental roofs without any embarrassing preliminary formula, were mere passing clouds that did not dim the golden imagery of the writer. From that day the Saints were adopted as historical lay figures, and entered at once into possession of uninterrupted gratuities and endowment.

It was not strange that, in a country largely made up of

ambitious and reckless youth, these two — types of conservative and settled forms — should be thus celebrated. Apart from any sentiment of veneration, they were admirable foils to the community's youthful progress and energy. They were put forward at every social gathering, occupied prominent seats on the platform at every public meeting, walked first in every procession, were conspicuous at the frequent funeral and rarer wedding, and were godfather and godmother to the first baby born in Rough-and-Ready. At the first poll opened in that precinct, Daddy Downey cast the first vote, and, as was his custom on all momentous occasions, became volubly reminiscent. "The first vote I ever cast," said Daddy, "was for Andrew Jackson — the father o' some on you peart young chaps was n't born then; he! he! — that was 'way long in '33, was n't it? I disremember now, but if Mammy was here, she bein' a school-gal at the time, she could say. But my memory 's failin' me. I 'm an old man, boys; yet I likes to see the young ones go ahead. I recklect that thar vote from a suckumstance. Squire Adams was present, and seein' it was my first vote, he put a goold piece into my hand, and, sez he, sez Squire Adams, 'Let that always be a reminder of the exercise of a glorious freeman's privilege!' He did; he! he! Lord, boys! I feel so proud of ye, that I wish I had a hundred votes to cast for ye all."

It is hardly necessary to say that the memorial tribute of Squire Adams was increased tenfold by the judges, inspectors, and clerks, and that the old man tottered back to Mammy considerably heavier than he came. As both of the rival candidates were equally sure of his vote, and each had called upon him and offered a conveyance, it is but fair to presume they were equally beneficent. But Daddy insisted upon walking to the polls, — a distance of two miles, — as a moral example, and a text for the Californian

paragraphers, who hastened to record that such was the influence of the foot-hill climate, that "a citizen of Rough-and-Ready, aged eighty-four, rose at six o'clock, and, after milking two cows, walked a distance of twelve miles to the polls, and returned in time to chop a cord of wood before dinner." Slightly exaggerated as this statement may have been, the fact that Daddy was always found by the visitor to be engaged at his wood-pile, which seemed neither to increase nor diminish under his axe, a fact, doubtless, owing to the activity of Mammy, who was always at the same time making pies, seemed to give some credence to the story. Indeed, the wood-pile of Daddy Downey was a standing reproof to the indolent and sluggish miner.

"Ole Daddy must use up a pow'ful sight of wood; every time I 've passed by his shanty he 's been makin' the chips fly. But what gets me is, that the pile don't seem to come down," said Whiskey Dick to his neighbor.

"Well, you derned fool!" growled his neighbor, "spose some chap happens to pass by thar, and sees the ole man doin' a man's work at eighty, and slouches like you and me lying round drunk, and that chap, feelin' kinder humped, goes up some dark night and heaves a load of cut pine over his fence, who 's got anything to say about it? — say?"

Certainly not the speaker, who had done the act suggested, nor the penitent and remorseful hearer, who repeated it next day.

The pies and cakes made by the old woman were, I think, remarkable rather for their inducing the same loyal and generous spirit than for their intrinsic excellence, and, it may be said, appealed more strongly to the nobler aspirations of humanity than its vulgar appetite. Howbeit, everybody ate Mammy Downey's pies, and thought of his childhood. "Take 'em, dear boys," the old lady would say; "it does me good to see you eat 'em; reminds me kinder of my poor

Sammy, that ef he 'd lived, would hev been ez strong and big ez you be, but was taken down with lung fever at Sweetwater. I kin see him yet; that 's forty years ago, dear! comin' out o' the lot to the bakehouse, and smilin' such a beautiful smile, like yours, dear boy, as I handed him a mince or a lemming turnover. Dear, dear, how I do run on! and those days is past! but I seems to live in you again!" The wife of the hotel-keeper, actuated by a low jealousy, had suggested that she "seemed to live *off* them;" but as that person tried to demonstrate the truth of her statement by reference to the cost of the raw material used by the old lady, it was considered by the camp as too practical and economical for consideration. "Besides," added Cy Perkins, "ef old Mammy wants to turn an honest penny in her old age, let her do it. How would you like your old mother to make pies on grub wages, eh?"—a suggestion that so affected his hearer (who had no mother) that he bought three on the spot. The quality of these pies had never been discussed but once. It is related that a young lawyer from San Francisco, dining at the Palmetto restaurant, pushed away one of Mammy Downey's pies with every expression of disgust and dissatisfaction. At this juncture, Whiskey Dick, considerably affected by his favorite stimulant, approached the stranger's table, and, drawing up a chair, sat uninvited before him.

"Mebbee, young man," he began gravely, "ye don't like Mammy Downey's pies?"

The stranger replied curtly, and in some astonishment, that he did not, as a rule, "eat pie."

"Young man," continued Dick with drunken gravity, "mebbee you 're accustomed to Charlotte rusks and blue mange; mebbee ye can't eat unless your grub is got up by one o' them French cooks? Yet *we*—us boys yar in this camp—calls that pie,—a good—com-pe-tent pie!"

The stranger again disclaimed anything but a general dislike of that form of pastry.

"Young man," continued Dick, utterly unheeding the explanation, — "young man, mebbee you onc't had an ole, a very ole mother, who, tottering down the vale o' years, made pies. Mebbee — and it 's like your blank epicurean soul — ye turned up your nose on the ole woman, and went back on the pies, and on her! She that dandled ye when ye woz a baby, — a little baby! Mebbee ye went back on her, and shook her, and played off on her, and gave her away — dead away! And now, mebbee, young man, — I would n't hurt ye for the world, — but mebbee, afore ye leave this yar table, YE 'LL EAT THAT PIE!"

The stranger rose to his feet, but the muzzle of a dragoon revolver in the unsteady hands of Whiskey Dick caused him to sit down again. He ate the pie, and lost his case likewise before a Rough-and-Ready jury.

Indeed, far from exhibiting the cynical doubts and distrusts of age, Daddy Downey received always with child-like delight the progress of modern improvement and energy. "In my day, long back in the twenties, it took us nigh a week — a week, boys — to get up a barn, and all the young ones — I was one then — for miles round at the raisin'; and yer 's you boys — rascals ye are, too — runs up this yer shanty for Mammy and me 'twixt sun-up and dark! Eh, eh, you 're teachin' the old folks new tricks, are ye? Ah, get along, you!" and in playful simulation of anger he would shake his white hair and his hickory staff at the "rascals." The only indication of the conservative tendencies of age was visible in his continual protest against the extravagance of the boys. "Why," he would say, "a family, a hull family, — leavin' alone me and the old woman, — might be supported on what you young rascals throw away in a single spree. Ah, you young dogs, did n't I hear about your scattering half-dollars on the

stage the other night when that Eyetalian Papist was singin'. And that money goes out of Ameriky — ivry cent!"

There was little doubt that the old couple were saving, if not avaricious. But when it was known, through the indiscreet volubility of Mammy Downey, that Daddy Downey sent the bulk of their savings, gratuities, and gifts, to a dissipated and prodigal son in the East, — whose photograph the old man always carried with him, — it rather elevated him in their regard. "When ye write to that gay and festive son o' your'n, Daddy," said Joe Robinson, "send him this yer specimen. Give him my compliments, and tell him, ef he kin spend money faster than I can, I call him! Tell him, ef he wants a first-class jamboree, to kem out here, and me and the boys will show him what a square drunk is!" In vain would the old man continue to protest against the spirit of the gift; the miner generally returned with his pockets that much the lighter, and it is not improbable a little less intoxicated than he otherwise might have been. It may be premised that Daddy Downey was strictly temperate. The only way he managed to avoid hurting the feelings of the camp was by accepting the frequent donations of whiskey to be used for the purposes of liniment.

"Next to snake-oil, my son," he would say, "and dilberry-juice, — and ye don't seem to pro-duce 'em here abouts, — whiskey is good for rubbin' onto old bones to make 'em limber. But pure cold water, 'sparklin' and bright in its liquid light,' and, so to speak, reflectin' of God's own linyments on its surfiss, is the best, onless, like poor ol' Mammy and me, ye gets the dumb-agur from overuse."

The fame of the Downey couple was not confined to the foot-hills. The Rev. Henry Gushington, D. D., of Boston, making a bronchial tour of California, wrote to the "Chris-

tian Pathfinder" an affecting account of his visit to them, placed Daddy Downey's age at 102, and attributed the recent conversions in Rough-and-Ready to their influence. That gifted literary Hessian, Bill Smith, traveling in the interests of various capitalists, and the trustworthy correspondent of four "only independent American journals," quoted him as an evidence of the longevity superinduced by the climate, offered him as an example of the security of helpless life and property in the mountains, used him as an advertisement of the Union Ditch, and it is said, in some vague way, cited him as proving the collateral facts of a timber and ore producing region existing in the foot-hills worthy the attention of Eastern capitalists.

Praised thus by the lips of distinguished report, fostered by the care and sustained by the pecuniary offerings of their fellow-citizens, the Saints led for two years a peaceful life of gentle absorption. To relieve them from the embarrassing appearance of eleemosynary receipts, — an embarrassment felt more by the givers than the recipients, — the postmastership of Rough-and-Ready was procured for Daddy, and the duty of receiving and delivering the United States mails performed by him, with the advice and assistance of the boys. If a few letters went astray at this time, it was easily attributed to this undisciplined aid, and the boys themselves were always ready to make up the value of a missing money-letter and "keep the old man's accounts square." To these functions presently were added the treasurerships of the Masons' and Odd Fellows' charitable funds, — the old man being far advanced in their respective degrees, — and even the position of almoner of their bounties was superadded. Here, unfortunately, Daddy's habits of economy and avaricious propensity came near making him unpopular, and very often needy brothers were forced to object to the quantity and quality of the help extended. They always met with more generous relief

from the private hands of the brothers themselves, and the remark that "the ol' man was trying to set an example, — that he meant well," — and that they would yet be thankful for his zealous care and economy. A few, I think, suffered in noble silence, rather than bring the old man's infirmity to the public notice.

And so with this honor of Daddy and Mammy, the days of the miners were long and profitable in the land of the foot-hills. The mines yielded their abundance, the winters were singularly open, and yet there was no drouth nor lack of water, and peace and plenty smiled on the Sierran foot-hills, from their highest sunny upland to the trailing falda of wild oats and poppies. If a certain superstition got abroad among the other camps, connecting the fortunes of Rough-and-Ready with Daddy and Mammy, it was a gentle, harmless fancy, and was not, I think, altogether rejected by the old people. A certain large, patriarchal, bountiful manner, of late visible in Daddy, and the increase of much white hair and beard, kept up the poetic allusion, while Mammy, day by day, grew more and more like somebody's fairy godmother. An attempt was made by a rival camp to emulate these paying virtues of reverence, and an aged mariner was procured from the Sailor's Snug Harbor in San Francisco on trial. But the unfortunate seaman was more or less diseased, was not always presentable, through a weakness for ardent spirits, and finally, to use the powerful idiom of one of his disappointed foster-children, "up and died in a week, without slinging ary blessin'."

But vicissitude reaches young and old alike. Youthful Rough-and-Ready and the Saints had climbed to their meridian together, and it seemed fit that they should together decline. The first shadow fell with the immigration to Rough-and-Ready of a second aged pair. The landlady of the Independence Hotel had not abated her malevolence towards the Saints, and had imported at consider-

able expense her grand-aunt and grand-uncle, who had been enjoying for some years a sequestered retirement in the poorhouse at East Machias. They were indeed very old. By what miracle, even as anatomical specimens, they had been preserved during their long journey, was a mystery to the camp. In some respects they had superior memories and reminiscences. The old man — Abner Trix — had shouldered a musket in the war of 1812; his wife, Abigail, had seen Lady Washington. She could sing hymns; he knew every text between "the leds" of a Bible. There is little doubt but that in many respects, to the superficial and giddy crowd of youthful spectators, they were the more interesting spectacle.

Whether it was jealousy, distrust, or timidity that overcame the Saints, was never known, but they studiously declined to meet the strangers. When directly approached upon the subject, Daddy Downey pleaded illness, kept himself in close seclusion, and the Sunday that the Trixes attended church in the schoolhouse on the hill, the triumph of the Trix party was mitigated by the fact that the Downeys were not in their accustomed pew. "You bet that Daddy and Mammy is lying low jest to ketch them old mummies yet," explained a Downeyite. For by this time schism and division had crept into the camp; the younger and later members of the settlement adhering to the Trixes, while the older pioneers stood not only loyal to their own favorites, but even, in the true spirit of partisanship, began to seek for a principle underlying their personal feelings. "I tell ye what, boys," observed Sweetwater Joe, "if this yer camp is goin' to be run by greenhorns, and old pioneers, like Daddy and the rest of us, must take back seats, it 's time we emigrated and shoved out, and tuk Daddy with us. Why, they 're talkin' of rotation in offiss, and of putting that skeleton that Ma'am Decker sets up at the table to take her boarders' appetites

away, into the post-office in place o' Daddy." And, indeed, there were some fears of such a conclusion; the newer men of Rough-and-Ready were in the majority, and wielded a more than equal influence of wealth and outside enterprise. "Frisco," as a Downeyite bitterly remarked, "already owned half the town." The old friends that rallied around Daddy and Mammy were, like most loyal friends in adversity, in bad case themselves, and were beginning to look and act, it was observed, not unlike their old favorites.

At this juncture Mammy died.

The sudden blow for a few days seemed to reunite dissevered Rough-and-Ready. Both factions hastened to the bereaved Daddy with condolements, and offers of aid and assistance. But the old man received them sternly. A change had come over the weak and yielding octogenarian. Those who expected to find him maudlin, helpless, disconsolate, shrank from the cold, hard eyes and truculent voice that bade them "begone," and "leave him with his dead." Even his own friends failed to make him respond to their sympathy, and were fain to content themselves with his cold intimation that both the wishes of his dead wife and his own instincts were against any display, or the reception of any favor from the camp that might tend to keep up the divisions they had innocently created. The refusal of Daddy to accept any service offered was so unlike him as to have but one dreadful meaning! The sudden shock had turned his brain! Yet so impressed were they with his resolution that they permitted him to perform the last sad offices himself, and only a select few of his nearer neighbors assisted him in carrying the plain deal coffin from his lonely cabin in the woods to the still lonelier cemetery on the hill-top. When the shallow grave was filled, he dismissed even these curtly, shut himself up in his cabin, and for days remained unseen. It was evident that he was no longer in his right mind.

His harmless aberration was accepted and treated with a degree of intelligent delicacy hardly to be believed of so rough a community. During his wife's sudden and severe illness, the safe containing the funds intrusted to his care by the various benevolent associations was broken into and robbed, and although the act was clearly attributable to his carelessness and preoccupation, all allusion to the fact was withheld from him in his severe affliction. When he appeared again before the camp, and the circumstances were considerately explained to him, with the remark that "the boys had made it all right," the vacant, hopeless, unintelligent eye that he turned upon the speaker showed too plainly that he had forgotten all about it. "Don't trouble the old man," said Whiskey Dick, with a burst of honest poetry. "Don't ye see his memory 's dead, and lying there in the coffin with Mammy?" Perhaps the speaker was nearer right than he imagined.

Failing in religious consolation, they took various means of diverting his mind with worldly amusements, and one was a visit to a traveling variety troupe, then performing in the town. The result of the visit was briefly told by Whiskey Dick. "Well, sir, we went in, and I sot the old man down in a front seat, and kinder propped him up with some other of the fellers round him, and there he sot as silent and awful ez the grave. And then that fancy dancer, Miss Grace Somerset, comes in, and dern my skin, ef the old man did n't get to trembling and fidgeting all over, as she cut them pidgin wings. I tell ye what, boys, men is men, way down to their boots, — whether they 're crazy or not! Well, he took on so, that I 'm blamed if at last that gal herself did n't notice him! and she ups, suddenly, and blows him a kiss — so! with her fingers!"

Whether this narration were exaggerated or not, it is certain that the old man Downey every succeeding night of the performance was a spectator. That he may have aspired

to more than that was suggested a day or two later in the following incident: A number of the boys were sitting around the stove in the Magnolia saloon, listening to the onset of a winter storm against the windows, when Whiskey Dick, tremulous, excited, and bristling with rain-drops and information, broke in upon them.

"Well, boys, I 've got just the biggest thing out. Ef I had n't seed it myself, I would n't hev believed it!"

"It ain't thet ghost ag'in?" growled Robinson, from the depths of his arm-chair; "thet ghost 's about played."

"Wot ghost?" asked a new-comer.

"Why, ole Mammy's ghost, that every feller about yer sees when he 's half full and out late o' nights."

"Where?"

"Where? Why, where should a ghost be? Meanderin' round her grave on the hill, yander, in course."

"It 's suthin bigger nor thet, pard," said Dick confidently; "no ghost kin rake down the pot ag'in the keerds I 've got here. This ain't no bluff!"

"Well, go on!" said a dozen excited voices.

Dick paused a moment diffidently, with the hesitation of an artistic raconteur.

"Well," he said, with affected deliberation, "let 's see! It 's nigh onto an hour ago ez I was down thar at the variety show. When the curtain was down betwixt the ax, I looks round fer Daddy. No Daddy thar! I goes out and asks some o' the boys. 'Daddy was there a minnit ago,' they say; 'must hev gone home.' Bein' kinder responsible for the old man, I hangs around, and goes out in the hall and sees a passage leadin' behind the scenes. Now the queer thing about this, boys, ez that suthin in my bones tells me the old man is *thar*. I pushes in, and, sure as a gun, I hear his voice. Kinder pathetic, kinder pleadin', kinder" —

"Love-makin'!" broke in the impatient Robinson.

"You 've hit it, pard, — you 've rung the bell every time! But she says, 'I want thet money down, or I'll' — and here I could n't get to hear the rest. And then he kinder coaxes, and she says, sorter sassy, but listenin' all the time, — woman like, ye know, Eve and the sarpint! — and she says, 'I'll see to-morrow.' And he says, 'You won't blow on me?' and I gets excited and peeps in, and may I be teetotally durned ef I didn't see" —

"What?" yelled the crowd.

"Why, *Daddy on his knees to that there fancy dancer*, Grace Somerset! Now, if Mammy's Ghost is meanderin' round, why, et 's about time she left the cemetery and put in an appearance in Jackson's Hall. Thet 's all!"

"Look yar, boys," said Robinson, rising, "I don't know ez it 's the square thing to spile Daddy's fun. I don't object to it, provided she ain't takin' in the old man, and givin' him dead away. But ez we 're his guardeens, I propose that we go down thar and see the lady, and find out ef her intentions is honorable. If she means marry, and the old man persists, why, I reckon we kin give the young couple a send-off thet won't disgrace this yer camp! Hey, boys?"

It is unnecessary to say that the proposition was received with acclamation, and that the crowd at once departed on their discreet mission. But the result was never known, for the next morning brought a shock to Rough-and-Ready before which all other interests paled to nothingness.

The grave of Mammy Downey was found violated and despoiled; the coffin opened, and half filled with the papers and accounts of the robbed benevolent associations; but the body of Mammy was gone! Nor, on examination, did it appear that the sacred and ancient form of that female had ever reposed in its recesses!

Daddy Downey was not to be found, nor is it necessary to say that the ingenuous Grace Somerset was also missing.

For three days the reason of Rough-and-Ready trembled

in the balance. No work was done in the ditches, in the flume, nor in the mills. Groups of men stood by the grave of the lamented relict of Daddy Downey, as open-mouthed and vacant as that sepulchre. Never since the great earthquake of '52 had Rough-and-Ready been so stirred to its deepest foundations.

On the third day the sheriff of Calaveras — a quiet, gentle, thoughtful man — arrived in town, and passed from one to the other of excited groups, dropping here and there detached but concise and practical information.

"Yes, gentlemen, you are right; Mrs. Downey is not dead, because there was n't any Mrs. Downey! Her part was played by George F. Fenwick, of Sydney, — a 'ticket-of-leave-man,' who was, they say, a good actor. Downey? Oh yes! Downey was Jem Flanigan, who, in '52, used to run the variety troupe in Australia, where Miss Somerset made her debut. Stand back a little, boys. Steady! The money? Oh yes, they 've got away with that, sure! How are ye, Joe? Why, you 're looking well and hearty! I rather expected ye court week. How 's things your way?"

"Then they were only play-actors, Joe Hall?" broke in a dozen voices.

"I reckon!" returned the sheriff coolly.

"And for a matter o' five blank years," said Whiskey Dick sadly, "they played this camp!"

"WHO WAS MY QUIET FRIEND?"

"STRANGER!"

The voice was not loud, but clear and penetrating. I looked vainly up and down the narrow, darkening trail. No one in the fringe of alder ahead; no one on the gullied slope behind.

"Oh, stranger!"

This time a little impatiently. The Californian classical vocative, "Oh," always meant business.

I looked up, and perceived for the first time on the ledge, thirty feet above me, another trail parallel with my own, and looking down upon me through the buckeye bushes a small man on a black horse.

Five things to be here noted by the circumspect mountaineer. First, the locality, — lonely and inaccessible, and away from the regular faring of teamsters and miners. Secondly, the stranger's superior knowledge of the road, from the fact that the other trail was unknown to the ordinary traveler. Thirdly, that he was well armed and equipped. Fourthly, that he was better mounted. Fifthly, that any distrust or timidity arising from the contemplation of these facts had better be kept to one's self.

All this passed rapidly through my mind as I returned his salutation.

"Got any tobacco?" he asked.

I had, and signified the fact, holding up the pouch inquiringly.

"All right, I'll come down. Ride on, and I'll jine ye on the slide."

"The slide!" Here was a new geographical discovery as odd as the second trail. I had ridden over the trail a dozen times, and seen no communication between the ledge and trail. Nevertheless, I went on a hundred yards or so, when there was a sharp crackling in the underbrush, a shower of stones on the trail, and my friend plunged through the bushes to my side, down a grade that I should scarcely have dared to lead my horse. There was no doubt he was an accomplished rider, — another fact to be noted. As he ranged beside me, I found I was not mistaken as to his size; he was quite under the medium height, and but for a pair of cold, gray eyes, was rather commonplace in feature.

"You've got a good horse there," I suggested.

He was filling his pipe from my pouch, but looked up a little surprised, and said, "Of course." He then puffed away with the nervous eagerness of a man long deprived of that sedative. Finally, between the puffs, he asked me whence I came.

I replied, "From Lagrange."

He looked at me a few moments curiously, but on my adding that I had only halted there for a few hours, he said: "I thought I knew every man between Lagrange and Indian Spring, but somehow I sorter disremember your face and your name."

Not particularly caring that he should remember either, I replied half laughingly that, as I lived the other side of Indian Spring, it was quite natural. He took the rebuff, if such it was, so quietly that as an act of mere perfunctory politeness I asked him where he came from.

"Lagrange."

"And are you going to" —

"Well! that depends pretty much on how things pan out, and whether I can make the riffle." He let his hand rest quite unconsciously on the leathern holster of his dragoon revolver, yet with a strong suggestion to me of his

ability "to make the riffle" if he wanted to, and added: "But just now I was reck'nin' on taking a little pasear with you."

There was nothing offensive in his speech save its familiarity, and the reflection, perhaps, that whether I objected or not, he was quite able to do as he said. I only replied that if our pasear was prolonged beyond Heavytree Hill, I should have to borrow his beast. To my surprise he replied quietly, "That 's so," adding that the horse was at my disposal when he was n't using it, and half of it when he was. "Dick has carried double many a time before this," he continued, "and kin do it again; when your mustang gives out I 'll give you a lift and room to spare."

I could not help smiling at the idea of appearing before the boys at Red Gulch en croupe with the stranger; but neither could I help being oddly affected by the suggestion that his horse had done double duty before. "On what occasion, and why?" was a question I kept to myself. We were ascending the long, rocky flank of the divide; the narrowness of the trail obliged us to proceed slowly, and in file, so that there was little chance for conversation, had he been disposed to satisfy my curiosity.

We toiled on in silence, the buckeye giving way to chemisal, the westering sun, reflected again from the blank walls beside us, blinding our eyes with its glare. The pines in the cañon below were olive gulfs of heat, over which a hawk here and there drifted lazily, or, rising to our level, cast a weird and gigantic shadow of slowly moving wings on the mountain side. The superiority of the stranger's horse led him often far in advance, and made me hope that he might forget me entirely, or push on, growing weary of waiting. But regularly he would halt by a boulder, or reappear from some chemisal, where he had patiently halted. I was beginning to hate him mildly, when at one of those reappearances he drew up to my side, and asked me how I liked Dickens!

Had he asked my opinion of Huxley or Darwin, I could not have been more astonished. Thinking it were possible that he referred to some local celebrity of Lagrange, I said, hesitatingly: "You mean"—

"Charles Dickens. Of course you 've read him? Which of his books do you like best?"

I replied with considerable embarrassment that I liked them all, — as I certainly did.

He grasped my hand for a moment with a fervor quite unlike his usual phlegm and said, "That 's me, old man. Dickens ain't no slouch. You can count on him pretty much all the time."

With this rough preface, he launched into a criticism of the novelist, which for intelligent sympathy and hearty appreciation I had rarely heard equaled. Not only did he dwell upon the exuberance of his humour, but upon the power of his pathos and the all-pervading element of his poetry. I looked at the man in astonishment. I had considered myself a rather diligent student of the great master of fiction, but the stranger's felicity of quotation and illustration staggered me. It is true, that his thought was not always clothed in the best language, and often appeared in the slouching, slangy undress of the place and period, yet it never was rustic nor homespun, and sometimes struck me with its precision and fitness. Considerably softened toward him, I tried him with other literature. But vainly. Beyond a few of the lyrical and emotional poets, he knew nothing. Under the influence and enthusiasm of his own speech, he himself had softened considerably; offered to change horses with me, readjusted my saddle with professional skill, transferred my pack to his own horse, insisted upon my sharing the contents of his whiskey flask, and noticing that I was unarmed, pressed upon me a silver-mounted Derringer, which he assured me he could "warrant." These various offices of good will and the diversion of his

talk beguiled me from noticing the fact that the trail was beginning to become obscure and unrecognizable. We were evidently pursuing a route unknown before to me. I pointed out the fact to my companion, a little impatiently. He instantly resumed his old manner and dialect.

"Well, I reckon one trail 's as good as another, and what hev ye got to say about it?"

I pointed out, with some dignity, that I preferred the old trail.

"Mebbe you did. But you 're jiss now takin' a pasear with me. This yer trail will bring you right into Indian Spring, and onnoticed, and no questions asked. Don't you mind now, I 'll see you through."

It was necessary here to make some stand against my strange companion. I said firmly, yet as politely as I could, that I had proposed stopping overnight with a friend.

"Whar?"

I hesitated. The friend was an eccentric Eastern man, well known in the locality for his fastidiousness and his habits as a recluse. A misanthrope, of ample family and ample means, he had chosen a secluded but picturesque valley in the Sierras where he could rail against the world without opposition. "Lone Valley," or "Boston Ranch," as it was familiarly called, was the one spot that the average miner both respected and feared. Mr. Sylvester, its proprietor, had never affiliated with "the boys," nor had he ever lost their respect by any active opposition to their ideas. If seclusion had been his object, he certainly was gratified. Nevertheless, in the darkening shadows of the night, and on a lonely and unknown trail, I hesitated a little at repeating his name to a stranger of whom I knew so little. But my mysterious companion took the matter out of my hands.

"Look yar," he said suddenly, "thar ain't but one place

'twixt yer and Indian Spring whar ye can stop, and that is Sylvester's."

I assented, a little sullenly.

"Well," said the stranger quietly, and with a slight suggestion of conferring a favor on me, "ef yer pointed for Sylvester's — why — *I don't mind stopping thar with ye.* It 's a little off the road, — I 'll lose some time, — but taking it by and large, I don't much mind."

I stated, as rapidly and as strongly as I could, that my acquaintance with Mr. Sylvester did not justify the introduction of a stranger to his hospitality; that he was unlike most of the people here; in short, that he was a queer man, etc., etc.

To my surprise my companion answered quietly: "Oh, that 's all right. I 've heerd of him. Ef you don't feel like checking me through, or if you 'd rather put 'C. O. D.' on my back, why, it 's all the same to me. I 'll play it alone. Only you just count me in. Say 'Sylvester' all the time. That 's me!"

What could I oppose to this man's quiet assurance? I felt myself growing red with anger and nervous with embarrassment. What would the correct Sylvester say to me? What would the girls, — I was a young man then, and had won an entrée to their domestic circle by my reserve, known by a less complimentary adjective among "the boys," — what would they say to my new acquaintance? Yet I certainly could not object to his assuming all risks on his own personal recognizances, nor could I resist a certain feeling of shame at my embarrassment.

We were beginning to descend. In the distance below us already twinkled the lights in the solitary rancho of Lone Valley. I turned to my companion. "But you have forgotten that I don't even know your name. What am I to call you?"

"That 's so," he said, musingly. "Now, let 's see.

'Kearney' would be a good name. It 's short and easy like. Thar 's a street in 'Frisco the same title; Kearney it is."

"But" — I began impatiently.

"Now you leave all that to me," he interrupted, with a superb self-confidence that I could not but admire. "The name ain't no account. It 's the man that 's responsible. Ef I was to lay for a man that I reckoned was named Jones, and after I fetched him I found out on the inquest that his real name was Smith, that would n't make no matter, as long as I got the man."

The illustration, forcible as it was, did not strike me as offering a prepossessing introduction, but we were already at the rancho. The barking of dogs brought Sylvester to the door of the pretty little cottage which his taste had adorned.

I briefly introduced Mr. Kearney. "Kearney will do — Kearney 's good enough for me," commented the soi-disant Kearney half-aloud, to my own horror and Sylvester's evident mystification, and then he blandly excused himself for a moment that he might personally supervise the care of his own beast. When he was out of ear-shot I drew the puzzled Sylvester aside.

"I have picked up — I mean I have been picked up on the road by a gentle maniac, whose name is not Kearney. He is well armed and quotes Dickens. With care, acquiescence in his views on all subjects, and general submission to his commands, he may be placated. Doubtless the spectacle of your helpless family, the contemplation of your daughter's beauty and innocence, may touch his fine sense of humor and pathos. Meanwhile, Heaven help you, and forgive me."

I ran up stairs to the little den that my hospitable host had kept always reserved for me in my wanderings. I lingered some time over my ablutions, hearing the languid,

gentlemanly drawl of Sylvester below, mingled with the equally cool, easy slang of my mysterious acquaintance. When I came down to the sitting-room I was surprised, however, to find the self-styled Kearney quietly seated on the sofa, the gentle May Sylvester, the "Lily of Lone Valley," sitting with maidenly awe and unaffected interest on one side of him, while on the other that arrant flirt, her cousin Kate, was practicing the pitiless archery of her eyes, with an excitement that seemed almost real.

"Who is your deliciously cool friend?" she managed to whisper to me at supper, as I sat utterly dazed and bewildered between the enrapt May Sylvester, who seemed to hang upon his words, and this giddy girl of the period, who was emptying the battery of her charms in active rivalry upon him. "Of course we know his name is n't Kearney. But how romantic! And is n't he perfectly lovely? And who is he?"

I replied with severe irony that I was not aware what foreign potentate was then traveling incognito in the Sierras of California, but that, when his royal highness was pleased to inform me, I should be glad to introduce him properly. "Until then," I added, "I fear the acquaintance must be Morganatic."

"You 're only jealous of him," she said pertly. "Look at May, — she is completely fascinated. And her father, too."

And actually the languid, world-sick, cynical Sylvester was regarding him with a boyish interest and enthusiasm almost incompatible with his nature. Yet I submit honestly to the clear-headed reason of my own sex, that I could see nothing more in the man than I have already delivered to the reader.

In the middle of an exciting story of adventure, of which he, to the already prejudiced mind of his fair auditors, was evidently the hero, he stopped suddenly.

"It's only some pack train passing the bridge on the lower trail," explained Sylvester; "go on."

"It may be my horse is a trifle oneasy in the stable," said the alleged Kearney; "he ain't used to boards and covering." Heaven only knows what wild and delicious revelation lay in the statement of this fact, but the girls looked at each other with cheeks pink with excitement as Kearney arose, and with quiet absence of ceremony quitted the table.

"Ain't he just lovely?" said Kate, gasping for breath, "and so witty!"

"Witty!" said the gentle May, with just the slightest trace of defiance in her sweet voice; "witty, my dear? why, don't you see that his heart is just breaking with pathos? Witty, indeed; why, when he was speaking of that poor Mexican woman that was hung, I saw the tears gather in his eyes. Witty, indeed!"

"Tears," laughed the cynical Sylvester, "tears, idle tears. Why, you silly children, the man is a man of the world, a philosopher, quiet, observant, unassuming."

"Unassuming!" Was Sylvester intoxicated, or had the mysterious stranger mixed the "insane verb" with the family pottage? He returned before I could answer this self-asked inquiry, and resumed coolly his broken narrative. Finding myself forgotten in the man I had so long hesitated to introduce to my friends, I retired to rest early, only to hear, through the thin partitions, two hours later, enthusiastic praises of the new guest from the voluble lips of the girls, as they chatted in the next room before retiring.

At midnight I was startled by the sound of horses' hoofs and the jingling of spurs below. A conversation between my host and some mysterious personage in the darkness was carried on in such a low tone that I could not learn its import. As the cavalcade rode away I raised the window.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Sylvester coolly; "only another one of those playful homicidal freaks peculiar to the country. A man was shot by Cherokee Jack over at Lagrange this morning, and that was the sheriff of Calaveras and his posse hunting him. I told him I'd seen nobody but you and your friend. By the way, I hope the cursed noise has n't disturbed him. The poor fellow looked as if he wanted rest."

I thought so too. Nevertheless, I went softly to his room. It was empty. My impression was that he had distanced the sheriff of Calaveras about two hours.

"A TOURIST FROM INJIANNY"

We first saw him from the deck of the Unser Fritz, as that gallant steamer was preparing to leave the port of New York for Plymouth, Havre, and Hamburg. Perhaps it was that all objects at that moment became indelibly impressed on the memory of the departing voyager; perhaps it was that mere interrupting trivialities always assume undue magnitude to us when we are waiting for something really important; but I retain a vivid impression of him as he appeared on the gangway in apparently hopeless, yet, as it afterwards appeared, really triumphant, altercation with the German-speaking deck-hands and stewards. He was not an heroic figure. Clad in a worn linen duster, his arms filled with bags and parcels, he might have been taken for a hackman carrying the luggage of his fare. But it was noticeable that, although he calmly persisted in speaking English and ignoring the voluble German of his antagonists, he in some rude fashion accomplished his object, without losing his temper or increasing his temperature, while his foreign enemy was crimson with rage and perspiring with heat; and that presently, having violated a dozen of the ship's regulations, he took his place by the side of a very pretty girl, apparently his superior in station, who addressed him as "father." As the great ship swung out into the stream he was still a central figure on our deck, getting into everybody's way, addressing all with equal familiarity, imperturbable to affront or snub, but always doggedly and consistently adhering to one purpose, however trivial or inadequate to the means employed.

"You 're sittin' on suthin' o' mine, miss," he began for the third or fourth time to the elegant Miss Montmorris, who was revisiting Europe under high social conditions. "Jist rise up while I get it, — 't won't take a minit." Not only was that lady forced to rise, but to make necessary the rising and discomposing of the whole Montmorris party who were congregated around her. The missing "suthin' " was discovered to be a very old and battered newspaper. "It 's the Cincinnatty 'Times,' " he explained, as he quietly took it up, oblivious to the indignant glances of the party. "It 's a little squoshed by your sittin' on it, but it 'll do to re-fer to. It 's got a letter from Payris, showin' the prices o' them thar hotels and rist'rants, and I allowed to my darter we might want it on the other side. Thar 's one or two French names thar that rather gets me, — mebbee your eyes is stronger;" but here the entire Montmorris party rustled away, leaving him with the paper in one hand — the other pointing at the paragraph. Not at all discomfited, he glanced at the vacant bench, took possession of it with his hat, "duster," and umbrella, disappeared, and presently appeared again with his daughter, a lank-looking young man, and an angular elderly female, and — so replaced the Montmorrises.

When we were fairly at sea he was missed. A pleasing belief that he had fallen overboard, or had been left behind, was dissipated by his appearance one morning, with his daughter on one arm, and the elderly female before alluded to on the other. The Unser Fritz was rolling heavily at the time, but with his usual awkward pertinacity he insisted upon attempting to walk toward the best part of the deck, as he always did, as if it were a right and a duty. A lurch brought him and his uncertain freight in contact with the Montmorrises, there was a moment of wild confusion, two or three seats were emptied, and he finally was led away by the steward, an obviously and obtrusively sick man. But

when he had disappeared below it was noticed that he had secured two excellent seats for his female companions. Nobody dared to disturb the elder, nobody cared to disturb the younger, — who it may be here recorded had a certain shy reserve which checked aught but the simplest civilities from the male passengers.

A few days later it was discovered that he was not an inmate of the first, but of the second cabin; that the elderly female was not his wife, as popularly supposed, but the room-mate of his daughter in the first cabin. These facts made his various intrusions on the saloon deck the more exasperating to the Montmorrises, yet the more difficult to deal with. Eventually, however, he had, as usual, his own way; no place was sacred, or debarred his slouched hat and duster. They were turned out of the engine-room to reappear upon the bridge, they were forbidden the forecastle to rise a ghostly presence beside the officer in his solemn supervision of the compass. They would have been lashed to the rigging on their way to the maintop, but for the silent protest of his daughter's presence on the deck. Most of his interrupting familiar conversation was addressed to the interdicted "man at the wheel."

Hitherto I had contented myself with the fascination of his presence from afar, — wisely, perhaps, deeming it dangerous to a true picturesque perspective to alter my distance, and perhaps, like the best of us, I fear, preferring to keep my own idea of him than to run the risk of altering it by a closer acquaintance. But one day when I was lounging by the stern rail, idly watching the dogged ostentation of the screw, that had been steadily intimating, after the fashion of screws, that it was the only thing in the ship with a persistent purpose, the ominous shadow of the slouched hat and the trailing duster fell upon me. There was nothing to do but accept it meekly. Indeed, my theory of the man made me helpless.

"I did n't know till yesterday who you be," he began deliberately, "or I should n't hev' been so onsocial. But I 've allers told my darter that in permiskiss trav'lin' a man oughter be keerful of who he meets. I've read some of your writin's, — read 'em in a paper in Injianny, but I never reckoned I 'd meet ye. Things is queer, and trav'lin' brings all sorter people together. My darter Looeze suspected ye from the first, and she worried over it, and kinder put me up to this."

The most delicate flattery could not have done more. To have been in the thought of this reserved, gentle girl, who scarcely seemed to notice even those who had paid her attention, was —

"She put me up to it," he continued calmly, "though she, herself, hez a kind o' pre-judise again you and your writin's, — thinkin' them sort o' low down, and the folks talked about not in her style; and ye know that 's woman's nater, and she and Miss Montmorris agree on that point. But thar 's a few friends with me round yer ez would like to see ye." He stepped aside and a dozen men appeared in Indian file from behind the round-house, and, with a solemnity known only to the Anglo-Saxon nature, shook my hand deliberately, and then dispersed themselves in various serious attitudes against the railings. They were honest, well-meaning countrymen of mine, but I could not recall a single face.

There was a dead silence; the screw, however, ostentatiously went on. "You see what I told you," it said. "This is all vapidity and trifling. I 'm the only fellow here with a purpose. Whiz, whiz, whiz; chug, chug, chug!"

I was about to make some remark of a general nature, when I was greatly relieved to observe my companion's friends detach themselves from the railings, and, with a slight bow and another shake of the hand, severally retire,

apparently as much relieved as myself. My companion, who had in the mean time acted as if he had discharged himself of a duty, said, "Thar ollers must be some one to tend to this kind o' thing, or thar 's no sociableness. I took a deppytation into the cap'n's room yesterday to make some proppysitions, and thar 's a minister of the Gospel aboard ez orter be spoke to afore next Sunday, and I reckon it 's my dooty, onless," he added with deliberate and formal politeness, "*you 'd* prefer to do it, — bein' so to speak a public man."

But the public man hastily deprecated any interference with the speaker's functions, and to change the conversation remarked that he had heard that there were a party of Cook's tourists on board, and — were not the preceding gentlemen of the number? But the question caused the speaker to lay aside his hat, take a comfortable position on the deck, against the rail, and, drawing his knees up under his chin, to begin as follows: —

"Speaking o' Cook and Cook's tourists, I 'm my own Cook! I reckon I calkilate and know every cent that I 'll spend 'twixt Evansville, Injianny, and Rome and Naples, and everything I 'll see." He paused a moment, and, laying his hand familiarly on my knee, said, "Did I ever tell ye how I kem to go abroad?"

As we had never spoken together before, it was safe to reply that he had not. He rubbed his head softly with his hand, knitted his iron-gray brows, and then said meditatively, "No! it must hev been that head waiter. He sorter favors you in the musstache and gen'ral get up. I guess it war him I spoke to."

I thought it must have been.

"Well, then, this is the way it kem about. I was sittin' one night, about three months ago, with my darter Looeze, — my wife bein' dead some four year, — and I was reading to her out of the paper about the Exposition. She sez to

me, quiet-like, — she 's a quiet sort o' gal if you ever notissed her, — ' I should like to go thar ; ' I looks at her, — it was the first time sense her mother died that that gal had ever asked for anything, or had, so to speak, a wish. It was n't her way. She took everything ez it kem, and durn my skin ef I ever could tell whether she ever wanted it to kem in any other way. I never told ye this afore, did I ? "

" No," I said hastily. " Go on."

He felt his knees for a moment, and then drew a long breath. " Perhaps," he began deliberately, " ye don't know that I'm a poor man. Seein' me here among these rich folks, goin' abroad to Paree with the best o' them, and Looeze thar — in the first cabin — a lady, ez she is — ye would n't b'leeve it, but I 'm poor ! I am. Well, sir, when that gal looks up at me and sez that, — I had n't but twelve dollars in my pocket, and I ain't the durned fool that I look, — but suthin' in me — suthin', you know, away back in me — sez, You shall ! Loo-ey, you shall ! and then I sez, — repeatin' it, and looking up right in her eyes, — ' You shall go, Loo-ey ' — did you ever look in my gal's eyes ? "

I parried that somewhat direct question by another, " But the twelve dollars, — how did you increase that ? "

" I raised it to two hundred and fifty dollars. I got odd jobs o' work here and there, overtime — I 'm a machinist I used to keep this yer over-work from Loo — saying I had to see men in the evenin' to get p'ints about Europe — and that — and getting a little money raised on my life insurance I shoved her through. And here we is, chipper and first class — all through — that is, Loo is ! "

" But two hundred and fifty dollars ! And Rome and Naples and return ? You can't do it."

He looked at me cunningly a moment. " Can't do it ? I 've done it ! "

" Done it ? "

"Wal, about the same, I reckon: I've figgered it out. Figgers don't lie. I ain't no Cook's tourist: I kin see Cook and give him p'ints. I tell you I've figgered it out to a cent, and I've money to spare. Of course I don't reckon to travel with Loo. She'll go first class. But I'll be near her if it's in the steerage of a ship, or in the baggage car of a railroad. I don't need much in the way of grub or clothes, and now and then I kin pick up a job. Perhaps you disremember that row I had down in the engine-room, when they chucked me out of it?"

I could not help looking at him with astonishment; there was evidently only a pleasant memory in his mind. Yet I recalled that I had felt indignant for him and his daughter.

"Well, that derned fool of a Dutchman, that chief engineer, gives me a job the other day. And ef I had n't just forced my way down there, and talked sassy at him, and criticised his macheen, he'd hev never knowed I knowed a eccentric from a wagon wheel. Do you see the p'int?"

I thought I began to see. But I could not help asking what his daughter thought of his traveling in this inferior way.

He laughed. "When I was gettin' up some p'ints from them books of travel I read her a proverb or saying outer one o' them, that 'only princes and fools and Americans traveled first-class.' You see I told her it did n't say 'women,' for they naterally would ride first-class — and Amerikan gals being princesses, did'nt count. Don' you see?"

If I did not quite follow his logic, nor see my way clearly into his daughter's acquiescence through this speech, some light may be thrown upon it by his next utterance. I had risen with some vague words of congratulation on his success, and was about to leave him, when he called me back.

"Did I tell ye," he said, cautiously looking around, yet with a smile of stifled enjoyment in his face, — "did I tell ye what that gal — my darter — said to me? No, I did 'nt tell ye — nor no one else afore. Come here!"

He made me draw down closely into the shadow and secrecy of the round-house.

"That night that I told my gal she should go abroad, I sez to her quite chipper-like and free, 'I say, Looey,' sez I, 'ye 'll be goin' for to marry some o' them counts or dukes, or poten-tates, I reckon, and ye 'll leave the old man.' And she sez, sez she, lookin' me squar in the eye — did ye ever notiss that gal's eye?"

"She has fine eyes," I replied cautiously.

"They is ez clean as a fresh milk-pan and ez bright. Nothin' sticks to 'em. Eh?"

"You are right."

"Well, she looks up at me this way," — here he achieved a vile imitation of his daughter's modest glance, not at all like her, — "and, looking at me, she sez quietly, 'That 's what I 'm goin' for, and to improve my mind.' He! he! he! It 's a fack! To marry a nobleman, and im-prove her mind! Ha! ha! ha!"

The evident enjoyment that he took in this, and the quiet ignoring of anything of a moral quality in his daughter's sentiments, or in his thus confiding them to a stranger's ear, again upset all my theories. I may say here that it is one of the evidences of original character that it is apt to baffle all prognosis from a mere observer's standpoint. But I recalled it some months after.

We parted in England. It is not necessary, in this brief chronicle, to repeat the various stories of "Uncle Joshua," as the younger and more frivolous of our passengers called him, nor that two thirds of the stories repeated were utterly at variance with my estimate of the character of the man, although I may add that I was also doubtful of the accuracy

of my own estimate. But one quality was always dominant, — his resistless, dogged pertinacity and calm imperturbability! "He asked Miss Montmorris if she 'minded' singin' a little in the second cabin to liven it up, and added, as an inducement, that they did n't know good music from bad," said Jack Walker to me. "And when he mended the broken lock of my trunk, he abtholutely propothed to me to athk couthin Grath if thee did n't want a 'koorier' to travel with her to 'do mechanics,' provided thee would take charge of that dreadfully deaf-and-dumb daughter of his. Wath n't it funny? Really he 'th one of your characters," said the youngest Miss Montmorris to me as we made our adieu on the steamer.

I am afraid he was not, although he was good enough afterwards to establish one or two of my theories regarding him. I was enabled to assist him once in an altercation he had with a cabman regarding the fare of his daughter, the cabman retaining a distinct impression that the father had also ridden in some obscure way in or upon the same cab, — as he undoubtedly had, — and, I grieve to say, foolishly. I heard that he had forced his way into a certain great house in England, and that he was ignominiously ejected, but I also heard that ample apologies had been made to a certain quiet, modest daughter of his who was without on the lawn, and that also a certain Personage, whom I approach, even in this vague way, with a capital letter, had graciously taken a fancy to the poor child, and had invited her to a reception.

But this is only hearsay evidence. So also is the story which met me in Paris, that he had been up with his daughter in the captive balloon, and that at an elevation of several thousand feet from the earth he had made some remarks upon the attaching cable and the drum on which the cable revolved, which not only excited the interest of the passengers, but attracted the attention of the authorities,

so that he was not only given a gratuitous ascent afterwards, but was, I am told, offered some gratuity. But I shall restrict this narrative to the few facts of which I was personally cognizant in the career of this remarkable man.

I was at a certain entertainment given in Paris by the heirs, executors, and assignees of an admirable man, long since gathered to his fathers in Père la Chaise, but whose Shakespeare-like bust still looks calmly and benevolently down on the riotous revelry of absurd wickedness of which he was, when living, the patron saint. The entertainment was of such a character that, while the performers were chiefly women, a majority of the spectators were men. The few exceptions were foreigners, and among them I quickly recognized my fair fellow-countrywomen, the Montmorrises. "Don't thay that you 've theen us here," said the youngest Miss Montmorris, "for ith only a lark. Ith awfully funny! And that friend of yourth from Injianny ith here with hith daughter." It did not take me long to find my friend "Uncle Joshua's" serious, practical, unsympathetic face in the front row of tables and benches. But beside him, to my utter consternation, was his shy and modest daughter. In another moment I was at his side. "I really think — I am afraid," I began in a whisper, "that you have made a mistake. I don't think you can be aware of the character of this place. Your daughter" —

"Kem here with Miss Montmorris. She 's yer. It 's all right."

I was at my wits' end. Happily, at this moment Mdlle. Rochefort from the Orangerie skipped out in the quadrille immediately before us, caught her light skirts in either hand, and executed a pas that lifted the hat from the eyes of some of the front spectators and pulled it down over the eyes of others. The Montmorrises fluttered away with a half-hysterical giggle and a half-confounded escort. The modest-looking Miss Loo, who had been staring at every-

thing quite indifferently, suddenly stepped forward, took her father's arm, and said sharply, "Come."

At this moment, a voice in English, but unmistakably belonging to the politest nation in the world, rose from behind the girl, mimickingly. "My God! it is schocking. I bloosh! O dammit!"

In an instant he was in the hands of "Uncle Joshua," and forced back clamoring against the railing, his hat smashed over his foolish, furious face, and half his shirt and cravat in the old man's strong grip. Several students rushed to the rescue of their compatriot, but one or two Englishmen and half a dozen Americans had managed in some mysterious way to bound into the arena. I looked hurriedly for Miss Louise, but she was gone. When we had extricated the old man from the mêlée, I asked him where she was.

"Oh, I reckon she 's gone off with Sir Arthur. I saw him here just as I pitched into that derned fool."

"Sir Arthur?" I asked.

"Yes, an acquaintance o' Loo's."

"She 's in my carriage, just outside," interrupted a handsome young fellow, with the shoulders of a giant and the blushes of a girl. "It 's all over now, you know. It was rather a foolish lark, you coming here with her without knowing — you know — anything about it, you know. But this way — thank you. She 's waiting for you," and in another instant he and the old man had vanished.

Nor did I see him again until he stepped into the railway carriage with me on his way to Liverpool. "You see I 'm trav'lin' first-class now," he said, "but goin' home I don't mind a trifle extry expense."

"Then you 've made your tour," I asked, "and are successful?"

"Wall, yes, we saw Switzerland and Italy, and if I hed n't been short o' time we 'd hev gone to Egypt.

Mebbee next winter I 'll run over again to see Loo, and do it."

"Then your daughter does not return with you?" I continued in some astonishment.

"Wall, no; she 's visiting some of Sir Arthur's relatives in Kent. Sir Arthur is there — perhaps you recollect him?" He paused a moment, looked cautiously around, and, with the same enjoyment he had shown on shipboard, said, "Do you remember the joke I told you on Loo, when she was at sea?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't ye say anything about it now. But dem my skin, if it does n't look like coming true."

And it did.

THE FOOL OF FIVE FORKS

He lived alone. I do not think this peculiarity arose from any wish to withdraw his foolishness from the rest of the camp, nor was it probable that the combined wisdom of Five Forks ever drove him into exile. My impression is, that he lived alone from choice, — a choice he made long before the camp indulged in any criticism of his mental capacity. He was much given to moody reticence, and, although to outward appearances a strong man, was always complaining of ill-health. Indeed, one theory of his isolation was that it afforded him better opportunities for taking medicine, of which he habitually consumed large quantities.

His folly first dawned upon Five Forks through the Post Office windows. He was for a long time the only man who wrote home by every mail, his letters being always directed to the same person, — a woman. Now it so happened that the bulk of the Five Forks' correspondence was usually the other way ; there were many letters received — the majority being in the female hand — but very few answered.

The men received them indifferently, or as a matter of course ; a few opened and read them on the spot with a barely repressed smile of self-conceit, or quite as frequently glanced over them with undisguised impatience. Some of the letters began with " My dear husband," and some were never called for. But the fact that the only regular correspondent of Five Forks never received any reply became at last quite notorious. Consequently, when an envelope was received bearing the stamp of the " Dead

Letter Office," addressed to the Fool under the more conventional title of "Cyrus Hawkins," there was quite a fever of excitement. I do not know how the secret leaked out, but it was eventually known to the camp that the envelope contained Hawkins' own letters returned. This was the first evidence of his weakness; any man who repeatedly wrote to a woman who did not reply must be a fool. I think Hawkins suspected that his folly was known to the camp, but he took refuge in symptoms of chills and fever, which he at once developed, and effected a diversion with three bottles of Indian cholagogue and two boxes of pills. At all events, at the end of a week he resumed a pen, stiffened by tonics, with all his old epistolatory pertinacity. This time the letters had a new address.

In those days a popular belief obtained in the mines that Luck particularly favored the foolish and unscientific. Consequently, when Hawkins struck a "pocket" in the hillside near his solitary cabin, there was but little surprise. "He will sink it all in the next hole," was the prevailing belief, predicted upon the usual manner in which the possessor of "nigger luck" disposed of his fortune. To everybody's astonishment, Hawkins, after taking out about eight thousand dollars and exhausting the pocket, did not prospect for another. The camp then waited patiently to see what he would do with his money. I think, however, that it was with the greatest difficulty their indignation was kept from taking the form of a personal assault when it became known that he had purchased a draft for eight thousand dollars in favor of "that woman." More than this, it was finally whispered that the draft was returned to him as his letters had been, and that he was ashamed to reclaim the money at the express office. "It would n't be a bad speckilation to go East, get some smart gal for a hundred dollars to dress herself up and represent that hag, and jest freeze on to that eight thousand," suggested a far-

seeing financier. I may state here that we always alluded to Hawkins' fair unknown as "The Hag," without having, I am confident, the least justification for that epithet.

That the Fool should gamble seemed eminently fit and proper. That he should occasionally win a large stake, according to that popular theory which I have recorded in the preceding paragraph, appeared also a not improbable or inconsistent fact. That he should, however, break the faro bank which Mr. John Hamlin had set up in Five Forks, and carry off a sum variously estimated at from ten to twenty thousand dollars, and not return the next day and lose the money at the same table, really appeared incredible. Yet such was the fact. A day or two passed without any known investment of Mr. Hawkins' recently acquired capital. "Ef he allows to send it to that Hag," said one prominent citizen, "suthin' ought to be done! It 's jest ruinin' the reputation of this yer camp — this sloshin' around o' capital on non-residents ez don't claim it!" "It 's settin' an example o' extravagance," said another, "ez is little better nor a swindle. Thar 's more 'n five men in this camp thet, hearin' thet Hawkins had sent home eight thousand dollars, must jest rise up and send home their hard earnings, too! And then to think thet that eight thousand was only a bluff, after all, and thet it 's lyin' there on call in Adams & Co.'s bank! Well! I say it 's one o' them things a vigilance committee oughter look into!"

When there seemed no possibility of this repetition of Hawkins' folly, the anxiety to know what he had really done with his money became intense. At last a self-appointed committee of four citizens dropped artfully, but to outward appearances carelessly, upon him in his seclusion. When some polite formalities had been exchanged, and some easy vituperation of a backward season offered by each of the parties, Tom Wingate approached the subject: —

"Sorter dropped heavy on Jack Hamlin the other night,

did n't ye? He allows you did n't give him no show for revenge. I said you was n't no such d—d fool — did n't I, Dick?" continued the artful Wingate, appealing to a confederate.

"Yes," said Dick promptly. "You said twenty thousand dollars was n't goin' to be thrown around recklessly. You said Cyrus had suthin' better to do with his capital," superadded Dick, with gratuitous mendacity. "I disremember now what partickler investment you said he was goin' to make with it," he continued, appealing with easy indifference to his friend.

Of course Wingate did not reply, but looked at the Fool who with a troubled face was rubbing his legs softly. After a pause he turned deprecatingly toward his visitors.

"Ye did n't enny of ye ever hev a sort of tremblin' in your legs, — a kind o' shakiness from the knee down? Suthin'," he continued, slightly brightening with his topic, "suthin' that begins like chills, and yet ain't chills. A kind o' sensation of goneness here, and a kind o' feelin' as if you might die suddent! When Wright's Pills don't somehow reach the spot, and Quinine don't fetch you?"

"No!" said Wingate, with a curt directness, and the air of authoritatively responding for his friends. "No, never had. You was speakin' of this yer investment."

"And your bowels all the time irregular!" continued Hawkins, blushing under Wingate's eye, and yet clinging despairingly to his theme like a shipwrecked mariner to his plank.

Wingate did not reply, but glanced significantly at the rest. Hawkins evidently saw this recognition of his mental deficiency, and said apologetically, "You was saying suthin' about my investment?"

"Yes," said Wingate, so rapidly as to almost take Hawkins' breath away, — "the investment you made in" —

"Rafferty's Ditch," said the Fool, timidly.

For a moment the visitors could only stare blankly at each other. "Rafferty's Ditch," the one notorious failure of Five Forks! Rafferty's Ditch, the impracticable scheme of an utterly unpractical man; Rafferty's Ditch, a ridiculous plan for taking water that could not be got to a place where it was n't wanted! Rafferty's Ditch, that had buried the fortunes of Rafferty and twenty wretched stockholders in its muddy depths!

"And thet 's it — is it?" said Wingate, after a gloomy pause. "Thet 's it! I see it all now, boys. Thet 's how ragged Pat Rafferty went down to San Francisco yesterday in store clothes, and his wife and four children went off in a kerridge to Sacramento. Thet 's why them ten workmen of his, ez hed 't a cent to bless themselves with, was playin' billiards last night and eatin' isters. Thet 's whar that money kum frum — one hundred dollars — to pay for thet long advertisement of the new issue of Ditch stock in the 'Times' yesterday. Thet 's why them six strangers were booked at the Magnolia Hotel yesterday. Don't you see — it 's thet money and thet Fool!"

The Fool sat silent. The visitors rose without a word.

"You never took any of them Indian Vegetable Pills?" asked Hawkins timidly, of Wingate.

"No," roared Wingate, as he opened the door.

"They tell me that took with the Panacea — they was out o' the Panacea when I went to the drug store last week — they say that, took with the Panacea, they always effect a certing cure." — But by this time Wingate and his disgusted friends had retreated, slamming the door on the Fool and his ailments.

Nevertheless in six months the whole affair was forgotten, the money had been spent — the "Ditch" had been purchased by a company of Boston capitalists, fired by the glowing description of an Eastern tourist, who had spent one drunken night at Five Forks — and I think even the

mental condition of Hawkins might have remained undisturbed by criticism, but for a singular incident.

It was during an exciting political campaign, when party feeling ran high, that the irascible Captain McFadden, of Sacramento, visited Five Forks. During a heated discussion in the Prairie Rose Saloon, words passed between the Captain and the Honorable Calhoun Bungstarter, ending in a challenge. The Captain bore the infelix reputation of being a notorious duellist and a dead shot: the Captain was unpopular; the Captain was believed to have been sent by the opposition for a deadly purpose; and the Captain was, moreover, a stranger. I am sorry to say that with Five Forks this latter condition did not carry the quality of sanctity or reverence that usually obtains among other nomads. There was consequently some little hesitation when the Captain turned upon the crowd and asked for some one to act as his friend. To everybody's astonishment, and to the indignation of many, the Fool stepped forward and offered himself in that capacity. I do not know whether Captain McFadden would have chosen him voluntarily, but he was constrained, in the absence of a better man, to accept his services.

The duel never took place! The preliminaries were all arranged, the spot indicated, the men were present with their seconds, there was no interruption from without, there was no explanation or apology passed — but the duel did *not* take place. It may be readily imagined that these facts, which were all known to Five Forks, threw the whole community into a fever of curiosity. The principals, the surgeon, and one second left town the next day. Only the Fool remained. *He* resisted all questioning — declaring himself held in honor not to divulge — in short, conducted himself with consistent but exasperating folly. It was not until six months had passed that Colonel Starbottle, the second of Calhoun Bungstarter, in a moment of weakness

superinduced by the social glass, condescended to explain. I should not do justice to the parties if I did not give that explanation in the Colonel's own words. I may remark, in passing, that the characteristic dignity of Colonel Starbottle always became intensified by stimulants, and that by the same process all sense of humor was utterly eliminated.

"With the understanding that I am addressing myself confidentially to men of honor," said the Colonel, elevating his chest above the bar-room counter of the Prairie Rose Saloon, "I trust that it will not be necessary for me to protect myself from levity, as I was forced to do in Sacramento on the only other occasion when I entered into an explanation of this delicate affair by — er — er — calling the individual to a personal account — er! I do not believe," added the Colonel, slightly waving his glass of liquor in the air with a graceful gesture of courteous deprecation — "knowing what I do of the present company — that such a course of action is required here. Certainly not — Sir — in the home of Mr. Hawkins — er — the gentleman who represented Captain McFadden, whose conduct, ged, Sir, is worthy of praise, blank me!

Apparently satisfied with the gravity and respectful attention of his listeners, Colonel Starbottle smiled relentingly and sweetly, closed his eyes half dreamily, as if to recall his wandering thoughts, and began: —

"As the spot selected was nearest the tenement of Mr. Hawkins, it was agreed that the parties should meet there. They did so promptly at half past six. The morning being chilly, Mr. Hawkins extended the hospitalities of his house with a bottle of Bourbon whiskey — of which all partook but myself. The reason for that exception is, I believe, well known. It is my invariable custom to take brandy — a wine-glassful in a cup of strong coffee — immediately on rising. It stimulates the functions, sir, without producing any blank derangement of the nerves."

The barkeeper, to whom, as an expert, the Colonel had graciously imparted this information, nodded approvingly, and the Colonel, amid a breathless silence, went on: —

"We were about twenty minutes in reaching the spot. The ground was measured, the weapons were loaded, when Mr. Bungstarter confided to me the information that he was unwell and in great *pain!* On consultation with Mr. Hawkins, it appeared that his principal in a distant part of the field was also suffering and in great pain. The symptoms were such as a medical man would pronounce 'choleraic.' I say *would* have pronounced, for on examination the surgeon was also found to be — er — in pain, and, I regret to say, expressing himself in language unbecoming the occasion. His impression was that some powerful drug had been administered. On referring the question to Mr. Hawkins, he remembered that the bottle of whiskey partaken by them contained a medicine which he had been in the habit of taking, but which, having failed to act upon him, he had concluded to be generally ineffective, and had forgotten. His perfect willingness to hold himself personally responsible to each of the parties, his genuine concern at the disastrous effect of the mistake, mingled with his own alarm at the state of his system, which — er — failed to — er — respond to the peculiar qualities of the medicine, was most becoming to him as a man of honor and a gentleman! After an hour's delay, both principals being completely exhausted, and abandoned by the surgeon, who was unreasonably alarmed at his own condition, Mr. Hawkins and I agreed to remove our men to Markleville. There, after a further consultation with Mr. Hawkins, an amicable adjustment of all difficulties, honorable to both parties, and governed by profound secrecy, was arranged. I believe," added the Colonel, looking around and setting down his glass, "no gentleman has yet expressed himself other than satisfied with the result."

Perhaps it was the Colonel's manner, but whatever was the opinion of Five Forks regarding the intellectual display of Mr. Hawkins in this affair, there was very little outspoken criticism at the moment. In a few weeks the whole thing was forgotten, except as part of the necessary record of Hawkins' blunders, which was already a pretty full one. Again some later follies conspired to obliterate the past, until, a year later, a valuable lead was discovered in the "Blazing Star" Tunnel, in the hill where he lived, and large sum was offered him for a portion of his land on the hill-top. Accustomed as Five Forks had become to the exhibition of his folly, it was with astonishment that they learned that he resolutely and decidedly refused the offer. The reason that he gave was still more astounding. He was about to build!

To build a house upon property available for mining purposes was preposterous; to build at all, with a roof already covering him, was an act of extravagance; to build a house of the style he proposed was simply madness!

Yet here were facts. The plans were made and the lumber for the new building was already on the ground, while the shaft of the "Blazing Star" was being sunk below. The site was, in reality, a very picturesque one, — the building itself of a style and quality hitherto unknown in Five Forks. The citizens, at first skeptical, during their moments of recreation and idleness gathered doubtingly about the locality. Day by day, in that climate of rapid growths, the building, pleasantly known in the slang of Five Forks as "the Idiot Asylum," rose beside the green oaks and clustering firs of Hawkins Hill, as if it were part of the natural phenomena. At last it was completed. Then Mr. Hawkins proceeded to furnish it with an expensiveness and extravagance of outlay quite in keeping with his former idiocy. Carpets, sofas, mirrors, and finally a piano — the only one known in the county, and brought at great expense

from Sacramento — kept curiosity at a fever heat. More than that, there were articles and ornaments which a few married experts declared only fit for women. When the furnishing of the house was complete — it had occupied two months of the speculative and curious attention of the camp — Mr. Hawkins locked the front door, put the key in his pocket, and quietly retired to his more humble roof, lower on the hillside!

I have not deemed it necessary to indicate to the intelligent reader all of the theories which obtained in Five Forks during the erection of the building. Some of them may be readily imagined. That "the Hag" had by artful coyness and systematic reticence at last completely subjugated the Fool, and that the new house was intended for the nuptial bower of the (predestined) unhappy pair, was of course the prevailing opinion. But when, after a reasonable time had elapsed, and the house still remained untenanted, the more exasperating conviction forced itself upon the general mind that the Fool had been for the third time imposed upon. When two months had elapsed and there seemed no prospect of a mistress for the new house, I think public indignation became so strong that, had "the Hag" arrived, the marriage would have been publicly prevented. But no one appeared that seemed to answer to this idea of an available tenant, and all inquiry of Mr. Hawkins, as to his intention in building a house and not renting it or occupying it, failed to elicit any further information. The reasons that he gave were felt to be vague, evasive, and unsatisfactory. He was in no hurry to move, he said; when he *was* ready, it surely was not strange that he should like to have his house all ready to receive him. He was often seen upon the veranda of a summer evening smoking a cigar. It is reported that one night the house was observed to be brilliantly lighted from garret to basement; that a neighbor, observing this, crept toward the open parlor window, and, looking in,

espied the Fool, accurately dressed in evening costume, lounging upon a sofa in the drawing-room, with the easy air of socially entertaining a large party. Notwithstanding this, the house was unmistakably vacant that evening, save for the presence of the owner, as the witnesses afterward testified. When this story was first related, a few practical men suggested the theory that Mr. Hawkins was simply drilling himself in the elaborate duties of hospitality against a probable event in his history. A few ventured the belief that the house was haunted. The imaginative editor of the Five Forks "Record" evolved from the depths of his professional consciousness a story that Hawkins' sweetheart had died, and that he regularly entertained her spirit in this beautifully furnished mausoleum. The occasional spectacle of Hawkins' tall figure pacing the veranda on moonlight nights lent some credence to this theory, until an unlooked-for incident diverted all speculation into another channel.

It was about this time that a certain wild, rude valley, in the neighborhood of Five Forks, had become famous as a picturesque resort. Travelers had visited it, and declared that there were more cubic yards of rough stone cliff, and a waterfall of greater height, than any they had visited. Correspondents had written it up with extravagant rhetoric and inordinate poetical quotation. Men and women who had never enjoyed a sunset, a tree, or a flower — who had never appreciated the graciousness or meaning of the yellow sunlight that flecked their homely doorways, or the tenderness of a midsummer's night, to whose moonlight they bared their shirt-sleeves or their tulle dresses — came from thousands of miles away to calculate the height of this rock, to observe the depth of this chasm, to remark upon the enormous size of this unsightly tree, and to believe with ineffable self-complacency that they really admired nature. And so it came to pass that, in accordance with the tastes or weaknesses of the individual, the

more prominent and salient points of the valley were christened, and there was a "Lace Handkerchief Fall," and the "Tears of Sympathy Cataract," and one distinguished orator's "Peak," and several "Mounts" of various noted people, living or dead; and an "Exclamation Point," and a "Valley of Silent Adoration." And, in course of time, empty soda-water bottles were found at the base of the cataract, and greasy newspapers and fragments of ham sandwiches lay at the dusty roots of giant trees. With this, there were frequent irruptions of closely shaven and tightly cravated men and delicate-faced women in the one long street of Five Forks, and a scampering of mules, and an occasional procession of dusty brown-linen cavalry.

A year after "Hawkins' Idiot Asylum" was completed, one day there drifted into the valley a riotous cavalcade of "school-marms," teachers of the San Francisco public schools, out for a holiday. Not severely-spectacled Minervas and chastely armed and mailed Pallases, but, I fear for the security of Five Fork, very human, charming, and mischievous young women. At least, so the men thought, working in the ditches and tunneling on the hillside; and when, in the interests of Science and the mental advancement of Juvenile Posterity, it was finally settled that they should stay in Five Forks two or three days for the sake of visiting the various mines, and particularly the "Blazing Star" Tunnel, there was some flutter of masculine anxiety. There was a considerable inquiry for "store clothes," a hopeless overhauling of old and disused raiment, and a general demand for "boiled shirts" and the barber.

Meanwhile, with that supreme audacity and impudent hardihood of the sex when gregarious, the school-marms rode through the town, admiring openly the handsome faces and manly figures that looked up from the ditches or rose behind the cars of ore at the mouths of tunnels. Indeed, it is alleged that Jenny Forester, backed and

supported by seven other equally shameless young women, had openly and publicly waved her handkerchief to the florid Hercules of Five Forks, — one Tom Flynn, formerly of Virginia, — leaving that good-natured but not over-bright giant pulling his blonde moustaches in bashful amazement.

It was a pleasant June afternoon that Miss Nelly Arnot, Principal of the primary department of one of the public schools of San Francisco, having evaded her companions, resolved to put into operation a plan which had lately sprung up in her courageous and mischief-loving fancy. With that wonderful and mysterious instinct of her sex, from whom no secrets of the affections are hid and to whom all hearts are laid open, she had heard the story of Hawkins' folly and the existence of the "Idiot Asylum." Alone, on Hawkins Hill, she had determined to penetrate its seclusion. Skirting the underbrush at the foot of the hill, she managed to keep the heaviest timber between herself and the "Blazing Star" Tunnel at its base, as well as the cabin of Hawkins, halfway up the ascent, until, by a circuitous route, at last she reached, unobserved, the summit. Before her rose, silent, darkened, and motionless, the object of her search. Here her courage failed her, with all the characteristic inconsequence of her sex. A sudden fear of all the dangers she had safely passed — bears, tarantulas, drunken men, and lizards — came upon her. For a moment, as she afterwards expressed it, "she thought she should die." With this belief, probably, she gathered three large stones, which she could hardly lift, for the purpose of throwing a great distance; put two hairpins in her mouth, and carefully readjusted with both hands two stray braids of her lovely blue-black mane which had fallen in gathering the stones. Then she felt in the pockets of her linen duster for her card-case, handkerchief, pocket-book, and smelling-bottle, and, finding them intact, suddenly assumed an air of easy, ladylike

unconcern, went up the steps of the veranda, and demurely pulled the front door-bell, which she knew would not be answered. After a decent pause, she walked around the encompassing veranda, examining the closed shutters of the French windows until she found one that yielded to her touch. Here she paused again to adjust her coquettish hat by the mirror-like surface of the long sash window that reflected the full length of her pretty figure. And then she opened the window and entered the room.

Although long closed, the house had a smell of newness and of fresh paint that was quite unlike the mouldiness of the conventional haunted house. The bright carpets, the cheerful walls, the glistening oilcloths were quite inconsistent with the idea of a ghost. With childish curiosity she began to explore the silent house, at first timidly, — opening the doors with a violent push, and then stepping back from the threshold to make good a possible retreat, — and then more boldly, as she became convinced of her security and absolute loneliness. In one of the chambers, the largest, there were fresh flowers in a vase, — evidently gathered that morning; and, what seemed still more remarkable, the pitchers and ewers were freshly filled with water. This obliged Miss Nelly to notice another singular fact, namely, that the house was free from dust, — the one most obtrusive and penetrating visitor of Five Forks. The floors and carpets had been recently swept, the chairs and furniture carefully wiped and dusted. If the house *was* haunted, it was possessed by a spirit who had none of the usual indifference to decay and mould. And yet the beds had evidently never been slept in, the very springs of the chair in which she sat creaked stiffly at the novelty, the closet doors opened with the reluctance of fresh paint and varnish, and, in spite of the warmth, cleanliness, and cheerfulness of furniture and decoration, there was none of the ease of tenancy and occupation. As Miss Nelly afterwards

confessed, she longed to "tumble things around," and, when she reached the parlor or drawing-room again, she could hardly resist the desire. Particularly was she tempted by a closed piano that stood mutely against the wall. She thought she would open it just to see who was the maker. That done, it would be no harm to try its tone. She did so, with one little foot on the soft pedal. But Miss Nelly was too good a player, and too enthusiastic a musician, to stop at half measures. She tried it again, — this time so sincerely that the whole house seemed to spring into voice. Then she stopped and listened. There was no response, — the empty rooms seemed to have relapsed into their old stillness. She stepped out on the veranda; a woodpecker recommenced his tapping on an adjacent tree, the rattle of a cart in the rocky gulch below the hill came faintly up. No one was to be seen far or near. Miss Nelly, reassured, returned. She again ran her fingers over the keys, — stopped, caught at a melody running in her mind, half played it, and then threw away all caution. Before five minutes had elapsed she had entirely forgotten herself, and with her linen duster thrown aside, her straw hat flung on the piano, her white hands bared, and a black loop of her braided hair hanging upon her shoulder, was fairly embarked upon a flowing sea of musical recollection.

She had played perhaps half an hour, when, having just finished an elaborate symphony and resting her hands on the keys, she heard very distinctly and unmistakably the sound of applause from without. In an instant the fires of shame and indignation leaped into her cheeks, and she rose from the instrument and ran to the window, only in time to catch sight of a dozen figures in blue and red flannel shirts vanishing hurriedly through the trees below.

Miss Nelly's mind was instantly made up. I think I have already intimated that under the stimulus of excitement she was not wanting in courage, and, as she quietly

resumed her gloves, hat, and duster, she was not perhaps exactly the young person that it would be entirely safe for the timid, embarrassed, or inexperienced of my sex to meet alone. She shut down the piano, and, having carefully reclosed all the windows and doors, and restored the house to its former desolate condition, she stepped from the veranda, and proceeded directly to the cabin of the unintellectual Hawkins, that reared its adobe chimney above the umbrage a quarter of a mile below.

The door opened instantly to her impulsive knock, and the Fool of Five Forks stood before her. Miss Nelly had never before seen the man designated by this infelicitous title, and as he stepped backward in half courtesy and half astonishment she was for the moment disconcerted. He was tall, finely formed, and dark-bearded. Above cheeks a little hollowed by care and ill-health shone a pair of hazel eyes, very large, very gentle, but inexpressibly sad and mournful. This was certainly not the kind of man Miss Nelly had expected to see, yet, after her first embarrassment had passed, the very circumstance, oddly enough, added to her indignation, and stung her wounded pride still more deeply. Nevertheless the arch hypocrite instantly changed her tactics with the swift intuition of her sex.

"I have come," she said with a dazzling smile, infinitely more dangerous than her former dignified severity, — "I have come to ask your pardon for a great liberty I have just taken. I believe the new house above us on the hill is yours. I was so much pleased with its exterior that I left my friends for a moment below here," she continued artfully, with a slight wave of the hand, as if indicating a band of fearless Amazons without, and waiting to avenge any possible insult offered to one of their number, "and ventured to enter it. Finding it unoccupied, as I had been told, I am afraid I had the audacity to sit down and amuse myself for a few moments at the piano — while waiting for my friends."

Hawkins raised his beautiful eyes to hers. He saw a very pretty girl, with frank gray eyes glistening with excitement, with two red, slightly freckled cheeks, glowing a little under his eyes, with a short scarlet upper lip turned back, like a rose-leaf, over a little line of white teeth, as she breathed somewhat hurriedly in her nervous excitement. He saw all this calmly, quietly, and, save for the natural uneasiness of a shy, reticent man, I fear without a quickening of his pulse.

"I knowed it," he said simply. "I heerd ye as I kem up."

Miss Nelly was furious at his grammar, his dialect, his coolness, and still more at the suspicion that he was an active member of her invisible *claque*.

"Ah," she said, still smiling, "then I think I heard *you*" —

"I reckon not," he interrupted gravely. "I did n't stay long. I found the boys hanging round the house, and I allowed at first I 'd go in and kinder warn you, but they promised to keep still, and you looked so comfortable and wrapped up in your music that I had n't the heart to disturb you, and kem away. I hope," he added earnestly, "they did n't let on ez they heerd you. They ain't a bad lot — them Blazin' Star boys — though they 're a little hard at times. But they 'd no more hurt ye then they would a — a — a cat!" continued Mr. Hawkins, blushing with a faint apprehension of the inelegance of his simile.

"No! no!" said Miss Nelly, feeling suddenly very angry with herself, the Fool, and the entire male population of Five Forks. "No! I have behaved foolishly, I suppose, — and if they *had* it would have served me right. But I only wanted to apologize to you. You 'll find everything as you left it. Good day!"

She turned to go. Mr. Hawkins began to feel embarrassed. "I 'd have asked ye to sit down," he said, finally,

"if it hed been a place fit for a lady. I oughter done so, enny way. I don't know what kept me from it. But I ain't well, Miss. Times I get a sort o' dumb ager — it 's the ditches, I think, Miss — and I don't seem to hev my wits about me."

Instantly Miss Arnot was all sympathy, — her quick woman's heart was touched.

"Can I — can anything be done?" she asked, more timidly than she had before spoken.

"No! — not onless ye remember suthin' about these pills." He exhibited a box containing about half a dozen. "I forget the direction — I don't seem to remember much, any way, these times — they 're 'Jones' Vegetable Compound.' If ye 've ever took 'em ye 'll remember whether the reg'lar dose is eight. They ain't but six here. But perhaps ye never tuk any," he added deprecatingly.

"No," said Miss Nelly, curtly. She had usually a keen sense of the ludicrous, but somehow Mr. Hawkins' eccentricity only pained her.

"Will you let me see you to the foot of the hill?" he said again, after another embarrassing pause.

Miss Arnot felt instantly that such an act would condone her trespass in the eyes of the world. She might meet some of her invisible admirers, — or even her companions, — and, with all her erratic impulses, she was nevertheless a woman, and did not entirely despise the verdict of conventionality. She smiled sweetly and assented, and in another moment the two were lost in the shadows of the wood.

Like many other apparently trivial acts in an uneventful life, it was decisive. As she expected, she met two or three of her late applauders, whom, she fancied, looked sheepish and embarrassed; she met also her companions looking for her in some alarm, who really appeared astonished at her escort, and, she fancied, a trifle envious of her

evident success. I fear that Miss Arnot, in response to their anxious inquiries, did not state entirely the truth, but, without actual assertion, led them to believe that she had at a very early stage of the proceeding completely subjugated this weak-minded giant, and had brought him triumphantly to her feet. From telling this story two or three times, she got finally to believing that she had some foundation for it; then to a vague sort of desire that it would eventually prove to be true, and then to an equally vague yearning to hasten that consummation. That it would redound to any satisfaction of the Fool she did not stop to doubt. That it would cure him of his folly she was quite confident. Indeed, there are very few of us — men or women — who do not believe that even a hopeless love for ourselves is more conducive to the salvation of the lover than a requited affection for another.

The criticism of Five Forks was, as the reader may imagine, swift and conclusive. When it was found out that Miss Arnot was not "the Hag" masquerading as a young and pretty girl, to the ultimate deception of Five Forks in general and the Fool in particular, it was decided at once that nothing but the speedy union of the Fool and the "pretty school-marm" was consistent with ordinary common sense. The singular good fortune of Hawkins was quite in accordance with the theory of his luck as propounded by the camp. That after "the Hag" failed to make her appearance he should "strike a lead" in his own house, without the trouble of "prospectin'," seemed to these casuists as a wonderful but inevitable law. To add to these fateful probabilities, Miss Arnot fell and sprained her ankle in the ascent of Mount Lincoln, and was confined for some weeks to the hotel after her companions had departed. During this period Hawkins was civilly but grotesquely attentive. When, after a reasonable time had elapsed, there still appeared to be no immediate prospect of

the occupancy of the new house, public opinion experienced a singular change in regard to its theories of Mr. Hawkins' conduct. "The Hag" was looked upon as a saint-like and long-suffering martyr to the weaknesses and inconsistency of the Fool. That, after erecting this new house at her request, he had suddenly "gone back" on her; that his celibacy was the result of a long habit of weak proposal and subsequent shameless rejection, and that he was now trying his hand on the helpless school-marm, — was perfectly plain to Five Forks. That he should be frustrated in his attempts at any cost was equally plain. Miss Nelly suddenly found herself invested with a rude chivalry that would have been amusing had it not been at times embarrassing; that would have been impertinent but for the almost superstitious respect with which it was proffered. Every day somebody from Five Forks rode out to inquire the health of the fair patient. "Hez Hawkins bin over yer to-day?" queried Tom Flynn, with artful ease and indifference as he leaned over Miss Nelly's easy-chair on the veranda. Miss Nelly, with a faint pink flush on her cheek, was constrained to answer "No." "Well, he sorter sprained his foot agin a rock yesterday," continued Flynn, with shameless untruthfulness. "You mus' n't think anything o' that, Miss Arnot. He 'll be over yer to-morrer, and meantime he told me to hand this yer bookay with regards, and this yer specimen!" And Mr. Flynn laid down the flowers he had picked *en route* against such an emergency, and presented respectfully a piece of quartz and gold which he had taken that morning from his own sluice-box. "You mus' n't mind Hawkins' ways, Miss Nelly," said another sympathizing miner. "There ain't a better man in camp than that theer Cy Hawkins! — but he don't understand the ways o' the world with wimen. He has n't mixed as much with society as the rest of us," he added, with an elaborate Chesterfieldian ease of manner,

"but he means well." Meanwhile a few other sympathetic tunnel-men were impressing upon Mr. Hawkins the necessity of the greatest attention to the invalid. "It won't do, Hawkins," they explained, "to let that there gal go back to San Francisco and say that when she was sick and alone, the only man in Five Forks under whose roof she had rested, and at whose table she had sat" — this was considered a natural but pardonable exaggeration of rhetoric — "ever threw off on her; and it shan't be done. It ain't the square thing to Five Forks." And then the Fool would rush away to the valley, and be received by Miss Nelly with a certain reserve of manner that finally disappeared in a flush of color, some increased vivacity, and a pardonable coquetry. And so the days passed; Miss Nelly grew better in health and more troubled in mind, and Mr. Hawkins became more and more embarrassed, and Five Forks smiled and rubbed its hands, and waited for the approaching dénouement. And then it came. But not perhaps in the manner that Five Forks had imagined.

It was a lovely afternoon in July that a party of Eastern tourists rode into Five Forks. They had just "done" the Valley of Big Things, and, there being one or two Eastern capitalists among the party, it was deemed advisable that a proper knowledge of the practical mining resources of California should be added to their experience of the merely picturesque in Nature. Thus far everything had been satisfactory; the amount of water which passed over the Fall was large, owing to a backward season; some snow still remained in the cañons near the highest peaks; they had ridden round one of the biggest trees, and through the prostrate trunk of another. To say that they were delighted is to express feebly the enthusiasm of these ladies and gentlemen, drunk with the champagny hospitality of their entertainers, the utter novelty of scene, and the dry, exhilarating air of the valley. One or two had

already expressed themselves ready to live and die there; another had written a glowing account to the Eastern press, depreciating all other scenery in Europe and America; and under these circumstances it was reasonably expected that Five Forks would do its duty, and equally impress the stranger after its own fashion.

Letters to this effect were sent from San Francisco by prominent capitalists there, and, under the able superintendence of one of their agents, the visitors were taken in hand, shown "what was to be seen," carefully restrained from observing what ought not to be visible, and so kept in a blissful and enthusiastic condition. And so the graveyard of Five Forks, in which but two of the occupants had died natural deaths, the dreary, ragged cabins on the hillsides, with their sad-eyed, cynical, broken-spirited occupants, toiling on, day by day, for a miserable pittance and a fare that a self-respecting Eastern mechanic would have scornfully rejected, were not a part of the Eastern visitors' recollection. But the hoisting works and machinery of the "Blazing Star Tunnel Company" was, — the Blazing Star Tunnel Company, whose "gentlemanly Superintendent" had received private information from San Francisco to do the "proper thing" for the party. Wherefore the valuable heaps of ore in the company's works were shown, the oblong bars of gold — ready for shipment — were playfully offered to the ladies who could lift and carry them away unaided, and even the tunnel itself, gloomy, fateful, and peculiar, was shown as part of the experience; and, in the noble language of one correspondent, "the wealth of Five Forks and the peculiar inducements that it offered to Eastern capitalists" were established beyond a doubt. And then occurred a little incident which, as an unbiased spectator, I am free to say offered no inducements to anybody whatever, but which, for its bearing upon the central figure of this veracious chronicle, I cannot pass over.

It had become apparent to one or two more practical and sober-minded in the party that certain portions of the "Blazing Star" Tunnel — (owing, perhaps, to the exigencies of a flattering annual dividend) — were economically and imperfectly "shored" and supported, and were consequently unsafe, insecure, and to be avoided. Nevertheless, at a time when champagne corks were popping in dark corners, and enthusiastic voices and happy laughter rang through the half-lighted levels and galleries, there came a sudden and mysterious silence. A few lights dashed swiftly by in the direction of a distant part of the gallery, and then there was a sudden sharp issuing of orders and a dull, ominous rumble. Some of the visitors turned pale — one woman fainted!

Something had happened. What? "Nothing" — the speaker is fluent but uneasy — "one of the gentlemen in trying to dislodge a 'specimen' from the wall had knocked away a support. There had been a 'cave' — the gentleman was caught and buried below his shoulders. It was all right — they'd get him out in a moment — only it required great care to keep from extending the 'cave.' Did n't know his name — it was that little man — the husband of that lively lady with the black eyes. Eh! Hullo there! Stop her. For God's sake! — not that way! She 'll fall from that shaft. She 'll be killed!"

But the lively lady was already gone. With staring black eyes, imploringly trying to pierce the gloom, with hands and feet that sought to batter and break down the thick darkness, with incoherent cries and supplications, following the moving of *ignis fatuus* lights ahead, she ran and ran swiftly! Ran over treacherous foundations, ran by yawning gulfs, ran past branching galleries and arches, ran wildly, ran despairingly, ran blindly, and at last ran into the arms of the Fool of Five Forks.

In an instant she caught at his hand. "Oh, save him!"

"It was built for you, Annie, darling," he said in a hurried whisper, "and has been waiting up there for you and me all these long days. It's deeded to you, Annie, and you must — live there — with *him!* He will not mind that I shall be always near you — for it stands above — my grave!"

And he was right. In a few minutes later, when he had passed away, they did not move him, but sat by his body all night with a torch at his feet and head. And the next day they walled up the gallery as a vault, but they put no mark or any sign thereon, trusting rather to the monument that, bright and cheerful, rose above him in the sunlight of the hill. For they said: "This is not an evidence of death and gloom and sorrow, as are other monuments, but is a sign of Life and Light and Hope, wherefore shall all men know that he who lies under it — is a Fool!"

THE MAN FROM SOLANO

He came toward me out of an opera lobby, between the acts, — a figure as remarkable as anything in the performance. His clothes, no two articles of which were of the same color, had the appearance of having been purchased and put on only an hour or two before, — a fact more directly established by the clothes-dealer's ticket which still adhered to his coat-collar, giving the number, size, and general dimensions of that garment somewhat obtrusively to an uninterested public. His trousers had a straight line down each leg, as if he had been born flat but had since developed; and there was another crease down his back, like those figures children cut out of folded paper. I may add that there was no consciousness of this in his face, which was good-natured, and, but for a certain squareness in the angle of his lower jaw, utterly uninteresting and commonplace.

"You disremember me," he said briefly, as he extended his hand, "but I'm from Solano, in Californy. I met you there in the spring of '57. I was tendin' sheep, and you was burnin' charcoal."

There was not the slightest trace of any intentional rudeness in the reminder. It was simply a statement of fact, and as such to be accepted.

"What I hailed ye for was only this," he said, after I had shaken hands with him. "I saw you a minnit ago standin' over in yon box, chirpin' with a lady, — a young lady, peart and pretty. Might you be telling me her name?"

I gave him the name of a certain noted belle of a neighboring city, who had lately stirred the hearts of the metropolis, and who was especially admired by the brilliant and fascinating young Dashboard, who stood beside me.

The Man from Solano mused for a moment, and then said, "Thet 's so! thet 's the name! It 's the same gal!"

"You have met her, then?" I asked in surprise.

"Ye-es," he responded slowly; "I met her about fower months ago. She 'd bin makin' a tour of Californy with some friends, and I first saw her aboard the cars this side of Reno. She lost her baggage checks, and I found them on the floor and gave 'em back to her, and she thanked me. I reckon now it would be about the square thing to go over thar and sorter recognize her." He stopped a moment, and looked at us inquiringly.

"My dear sir," struck in the brilliant and fascinating young Dashboard, "if your hesitation proceeds from any doubt as to the propriety of your attire, I beg you to dismiss it from your mind at once. The tyranny of custom, it is true, compels your friend and myself to dress peculiarly, but I assure you nothing could be finer than the way that the olive green of your coat melts in the delicate yellow of your cravat, or the pearl gray of your trousers blends with the bright blue of your waistcoat, and lends additional brilliancy to that massive oroid watch-chain which you wear."

To my surprise, the Man from Solano did not strike him. He looked at the ironical Dashboard with grave earnestness, and then said quietly: —

"Then I reckon you would n't mind showin' me in thar?"

Dashboard was, I admit, a little staggered at this. But he recovered himself, and, bowing ironically, led the way to the box. I followed him and the Man from Solano.

Now the belle in question happened to be a gentlewoman,

— descended from gentlewomen, — and after Dashboard's ironical introduction, in which the Man from Solano was not spared, she comprehended the situation instantly. To Dashboard's surprise she drew a chair to her side, made the Man from Solano sit down, quietly turned her back on Dashboard, and, in full view of the brilliant audience and the focus of a hundred lorgnettes, entered into conversation with him.

Here, for the sake of romance, I should like to say he became animated, and exhibited some trait of excellence, — some rare wit or solid sense. But the fact is he was dull and stupid to the last degree. He persisted in keeping the conversation upon the subject of the lost baggage-checks, and every bright attempt of the lady to divert him failed signally. At last, to everybody's relief, he rose, and, leaning over her chair, said: —

"I calklate to stop over here some time, miss, and you and me bein' sorter strangers here, maybe when there 's any show like this goin' on you 'll let me" —

Miss X. said somewhat hastily that the multiplicity of her engagements and the brief limit of her stay in New York she feared would, etc., etc. The two other ladies had their handkerchiefs over their mouths, and were staring intently on the stage, when the Man from Solano continued: —

"Then, maybe, miss, whenever there is a show goin' on that you 'll attend, you 'll just drop me word to Earle's Hotel, to this yer address," and he pulled from his pocket a dozen well-worn letters, and, taking the buff envelope from one, handed it to her with something like a bow.

"Certainly," broke in the facetious Dashboard; "Miss X. goes to the Charity Ball to-morrow night. The tickets are but a trifle to an opulent Californian, and a man of your evident means, and the object a worthy one You will, no doubt, easily secure an invitation."

Miss X. raised her handsome eyes for a moment to Dashboard. "By all means," she said, turning to the Man from Solano; "and as Mr. Dashboard is one of the managers, and you are a stranger, he will, of course, send you a complimentary ticket. I have known Mr. Dashboard long enough to know that he is invariably courteous to strangers and a gentleman." She settled herself in her chair again and fixed her eyes upon the stage.

The Man from Solano thanked the Man of New York, and then, after shaking hands with everybody in the box, turned to go. When he had reached the door he looked back to Miss X. and said: —

"It *was* one of the queerest things in the world, miss, that my findin' them checks" —

But the curtain had just then risen on the garden scene in "Faust," and Miss X. was absorbed. The Man from Solano carefully shut the box door and retired. I followed him. He was silent until he reached the lobby, and then he said, as if renewing a previous conversation, "She *is* a mighty peart gal, — that's so. She's just my kind, and will make a stavin' good wife."

I thought I saw danger ahead for the Man from Solano, so I hastened to tell him that she was beset by attentions, that she could have her pick and choice of the best of society, and finally, that she was, most probably, engaged to Dashboard.

"That's so," he said quietly, without the slightest trace of feeling. "It would be mighty queer if she was n't. But I reckon I 'll steer down to the ho-tel. I don't care much for this yellin'." (He was alluding to a cadenza of that famous cantatrice, Signora Batti Batti.) "What's the time?"

He pulled out his watch. It was such a glaring chain, so obviously bogus, that my eyes were fascinated by it. "You're looking at that watch," he said; "it's purty to

look at, but she don't go worth a cent. And yet her price was $125 gold. I gobbled her up in Chatham Street day before yesterday, where they were selling 'em very cheap at auction."

"You have been outrageously swindled," I said indignantly. "Watch and chain are not worth twenty dollars."

"Are they worth fifteen?" he asked gravely.

"Possibly."

"Then I reckon it 's a fair trade. Ye see, I told 'em I was a Californian from Solano, and had n't anything about me of greenbacks. I had three slugs with me. Ye remember them slugs?" (I did; the "slug" was a "token" issued in the early days, — a hexagonal piece of gold a little over twice the size of a twenty-dollar gold piece, — worth and accepted for fifty dollars.)

"Well, I handed them that, and they handed me the watch. You see them slugs I had made myself outer brass filings and iron pyrites, and used to slap 'em down on the boys for a bluff in a game of draw poker. You see, not being reg'lar gov'ment money, it was n't counterfeiting. I reckon they cost me, counting time and anxiety, about fifteen dollars. So, if this yer watch is worth that, it's about a square game, ain't it?"

I began to understand the Man from Solano, and said it was. He returned his watch to his pocket, toyed playfully with the chain, and remarked, "Kinder makes a man look fash'nable and wealthy, don't it?"

I agreed with him. "But what do you intend to do here?" I asked.

"Well, I 've got a cash capital of nigh on seven hundred dollars. I guess until I get into reg'lar business I 'll skirmish round Wall Street, and sorter lay low." I was about to give him a few words of warning, but I remembered his watch and desisted. We shook hands and parted.

A few days after I met him on Broadway He was attired in another new suit, but I think I saw a slight improvement in his general appearance. Only five distinct colors were visible in his attire. But this, I had reason to believe afterwards, was accidental.

I asked him if he had been to the ball. He said he had. "That gal, and a mighty peart gal she was too, was there, but she sorter fought shy of me. I got this new suit to go in, but those waiters sorter run me into a private box, and I did n't get much chance to continner our talk about them checks. But that young feller, Dashboard, was mighty perlite. He brought lots of fellers and young women round to the box to see me, and he made up a party that night to take me round Wall Street and in them Stock Boards. And the next day he called for me, and took me, and I invested about five hundred dollars in them stocks, — maybe more. You see, we sorter swopped stocks. You know I had ten shares in the Peacock Copper Mine, that you was once secretary of."

"But those shares are not worth a cent. The whole thing exploded ten years ago."

"That 's so, maybe; *you* say so. But then I did n't know anything more about Communipaw Central, or the Naphtha Gaslight Company, and so I thought it was a square game. Only I realized on the stocks I bought, and I kem up outer Wall Street about four hundred dollars better. You see it was a sorter risk, after all, for them Peacock stocks *might* come up!"

I looked into his face: it was immeasurably serene and commonplace. I began to be a little afraid of the man, or, rather, of my want of judgment of the man; and after a few words we shook hands and parted.

It was some months before I again saw the Man from Solano. When I did, I found that he had actually become a member of the Stock Board, and had a little office on

Broad Street, where he transacted a fair business. My remembrance going back to the first night I met him, I inquired if he had renewed his acquaintance with Miss X.

"I heerd that she was in Newport this summer, and I ran down there fur a week."

"And you talked with her about the baggage-checks?"

"No," he said seriously; "she gave me a commission to buy some stocks for her. You see, I guess them fash'nable fellers sorter got to runnin' her about me, and so she put our acquaintance on a square business footing. I tell you, she 's a right peart gal. Did ye hear of the accident that happened to her?"

I had not.

"Well, you see, she was out yachting, and I managed through one of those fellers to get an invite, too. The whole thing was got up by a man that they say is going to marry her. Well, one afternoon the boom swings round in a little squall and knocks her overboard. There was an awful excitement, — you 've heard about it, maybe?"

"No!" But I saw it all with a romancer's instinct in a flash of poetry! This poor fellow, debarred through uncouthness from expressing his affection for her, had at last found his fitting opportunity. He had —

"Thar was an awful row," he went on. "I ran out on the taffrail, and there a dozen yards away was that purty creature, that peart gal, and — I" —

"You jumped for her," I said hastily.

"No!" he said gravely. "I let the other man do the jumping. I sorter looked on."

I stared at him in astonishment.

"No," he went on seriously. "He was the man who jumped; that was just then his 'put,' — his line of business. You see if I had waltzed over the side of that ship, and cavoorted in, and flummuxed round, and finally flopped to the bottom, that other man would have jumped nateral-

like and saved her; and ez he was going to marry her any way, I don't exactly see where *I'd* hev been represented in the transaction. But don't you see, ef, after he'd jumped and had n't got her, he 'd gone down himself, I 'd hev had the next best chance, and the advantage of heving him outer the way. You see, you don't understand me, — I don't think you did in Californy."

"Then he did save her?"

"Of course. Don't you see, she was all right. If he'd missed her, I 'd have chipped in. Thar war n't no sense in my doing his duty onless he failed."

Somehow the story got out. The Man from Solano as a butt became more popular than ever, and of course received invitations to burlesque receptions, and naturally met a great many people whom otherwise he would not have seen. It was observed also that his seven hundred dollars were steadily growing, and that he seemed to be getting on in his business. Certain Californian stocks which I had seen quietly interred in the old days in the tombs of their fathers were magically revived; and I remember, as one who has seen a ghost, to have been shocked as I looked over the quotations, one morning, to see the ghastly face of the "Dead Beach Mining Co.," rouged and plastered, looking out from the columns of the morning paper. At last a few people began to respect, or suspect, the Man from Solano. At last suspicion culminated with this incident: —

He had long expressed a wish to belong to a certain "fash'nable" club, and with a view of burlesque he was invited to visit the club, where a series of ridiculous entertainments were given him, winding up with a card party. As I passed the steps of the club-house early next morning, I overheard two or three members talking excitedly.

"He cleaned everybody out." — "Why, he must have raked in nigh on $40,000."

"Who?" I asked.

"The Man from Solano."

As I turned away, one of the gentlemen, a victim, noted for his sporting propensities, followed me, and, laying his hand on my shoulder, asked, —

"Tell me fairly now. What business did your friend follow in California?"

"He was a shepherd."

"A what?"

"A shepherd. Tended his flocks on the honey-scented hills of Solano."

"Well, all I can say is, d—n your Californian pastorals!"

A GHOST OF THE SIERRAS

It was a vast silence of pines, redolent with balsamic breath, and muffled with the dry dust of dead bark and matted mosses. Lying on our backs, we looked upward through a hundred feet of clear, unbroken interval to the first lateral branches that formed the flat canopy above us. Here and there the fierce sun, from whose active persecution we had just escaped, searched for us through the woods, but its keen blade was dulled and turned aside by intercostal boughs, and its brightness dissipated in nebulous mists throughout the roofing of the dim, brown aisles around us. We were in another atmosphere, under another sky; indeed, in another world than the dazzling one we had just quitted. The grave silence seemed so much a part of the grateful coolness, that we hesitated to speak, and for some moments lay quietly outstretched on the pine tassels where we had first thrown ourselves. Finally a voice broke the silence: —

"Ask the old Major; he knows all about it!"

The person here alluded to under that military title was myself. I hardly need explain to any Californian that it by no means followed that I was a "Major," or that I was "old," or that I knew anything about "it," or indeed what "it" referred to. The whole remark was merely one of the usual conventional feelers to conversation, — a kind of social preamble, quite common to our slangy camp intercourse. Nevertheless, as I was always known as the Major, perhaps for no better reason than that the speaker, an old journalist, was always called Doctor, I recognized the fact so far as to kick aside an intervening saddle, so that I could

see the speaker's face on a level with my own, and said nothing.

"About ghosts!" said the Doctor, after a pause, which nobody broke or was expected to break. "Ghosts, sir! That 's what we want to know. What are we doing here in this blank old mausoleum of Calaveras County, if it is n't to find out something about 'em, eh?"

Nobody replied.

"Thar 's that haunted house at Cave City. Can't be more than a mile or two away, anyhow. Used to be just off the trail."

A dead silence.

The Doctor (addressing space generally): "Yes, sir; it *was* a mighty queer story."

Still the same reposeful indifference. We all knew the Doctor's skill as a *raconteur;* we all knew that a story was coming, and we all knew that any interruption would be fatal. Time and time again, in our prospecting experience, had a word of polite encouragement, a rash expression of interest, even a too eager attitude of silent expectancy, brought the Doctor to a sudden change of subject. Time and time again have we seen the unwary stranger stand amazed and bewildered between our own indifference and the sudden termination of a promising anecdote, through his own unlucky interference. So we said nothing. "The Judge" — another instance of arbitrary nomenclature — pretended to sleep. Jack began to twist a *cigarrito.* Thornton bit off the ends of pine needles reflectively.

"Yes, sir," continued the Doctor, coolly resting the back of his head on the palms of his hands, "it *was* rather curious. All except the murder. *That's* what gets me, for the murder had no new points, no fancy touches, no sentiment, no mystery. Was just one of the old style, 'sub-head' paragraphs. Old-fashioned miner scrubs along on hardtack and beans, and saves up a little money to go

home and see relations. Old-fashioned assassin sharpens up knife, old style; loads old flint-lock, brass-mounted pistols; walks in on old-fashioned miner one dark night, sends him home to his relations away back to several generations, and walks off with the swag. No mystery *there;* nothing to clear up; subsequent revelations only impertinence. Nothing for any ghost to do — who meant business. More than that, over forty murders, same old kind, committed every year in Calaveras, and no spiritual post obits coming due every anniversary; no assessments made on the peace and quiet of the surviving community. I tell you what, boys, I 've always been inclined to throw off on the Cave City ghost for that alone. It 's a bad precedent, sir. If that kind o' thing is going to obtain in the foot-hills, we 'll have the trails full of chaps formerly knocked over by Mexicans and road agents; every little camp and grocery will have stock enough on hand to go into business, and where 's there any security for surviving life and property, eh? What 's your opinion, Judge, as a fair-minded legislator?"

Of course there was no response. Yet it was part of the Doctor's system of aggravation to become discursive at these moments, in the hope of interruption, and he continued for some moments to dwell on the terrible possibility of a state of affairs in which a gentleman could no longer settle a dispute with an enemy without being subjected to succeeding spiritual embarrassment. But all this digression fell upon apparently inattentive ears.

"Well, sir, after the murder, the cabin stood for a long time deserted and tenantless. Popular opinion was against it. One day a ragged prospector, savage with hard labor and harder luck, came to the camp, looking for a place to live and a chance to prospect. After the boys had taken his measure, they concluded that he 'd already tackled so much in the way of difficulties that a ghost more or less

would n't be of much account. So they sent him to the haunted cabin. He had a big yellow dog with him, about as ugly and as savage as himself; and the boys sort o' congratulated themselves, from a practical view point, that, while they were giving the old ruffian a shelter, they were helping in the cause of Christianity against ghosts and goblins. They had little faith in the old man, but went their whole pile on that dog. That 's where they were mistaken.

"The house stood almost three hundred feet from the nearest cave, and on dark nights, being in a hollow, was as lonely as if it had been on the top of Shasta. If you ever saw the spot when there was just moon enough to bring out the little surrounding clumps of chaparral until they looked like crouching figures, and make the bits of broken quartz glisten like skulls, you 'd begin to understand how big a contract that man and that yellow dog undertook.

"They went into possession that afternoon, and old Hard Times set out to cook his supper. When it was over he sat down by the embers and lit his pipe, the yellow dog lying at his feet. Suddenly 'Rap! rap!' comes from the door. 'Come in,' says the man gruffly. 'Rap!' again. 'Come in and be d—d to you,' says the man, who had no idea of getting up to open the door. But no one responded, and the next moment smash goes the only sound pane in the only window. Seeing this, old Hard Times gets up, with the devil in his eye, and a revolver in his hand, followed by the yellow dog, with every tooth showing, and swings open the door. No one there! But as the man opened the door, that yellow dog, that had been so chipper before, suddenly begins to crouch and step backward, step by step, trembling and shivering, and at last crouches down in the chimney, without even so much as looking at his master. The man slams the door shut again, but there comes another smash. This time it seems to come from

inside the cabin, and it is n't until the man looks around and sees everything quiet that he gets up, without speaking, and makes a dash for the door, and tears round outside the cabin like mad, but finds nothing but silence and darkness. Then he comes back swearing and calls the dog. But that great yellow dog that the boys would have staked all their money on is crouching under the bunk, and has to be dragged out like a coon from a hollow tree, and lies there, his eyes starting from their sockets; every limb and muscle quivering with fear, and his very hair drawn up in bristling ridges. The man calls him to the door. He drags himself a few steps, stops, sniffs, and refuses to go farther. The man calls him again, with an oath and a threat. Then what does that yellow dog do? He crawls edgewise towards the door, crouching himself against the bunk, till he 's flatter than a knife blade; then, halfway, he stops. Then that d—d yellow dog begins to walk gingerly, — lifting each foot up in the air, one after the other, still trembling in every limb. Then he stops again. Then he crouches Then he gives one little shuddering leap, — not straight forward, but up, — clearing the floor about six inches, as if " —

" Over something," interrupted the Judge hastily, lifting himself on his elbow.

The Doctor stopped instantly. " Juan," he said coolly to one of the Mexican packers, " quit foolin' with that *riata*. You 'll have that stake out and that mule loose in another minute. Come over this way ! "

The Mexican turned a scared, white face to the Doctor, muttering something, and let go the deerskin hide. We all upraised our voices with one accord, the Judge most penitently and apologetically, and implored the Doctor to go on. " I 'll shoot the first man who interrupts you again," added Thornton persuasively.

But the Doctor, with his hands languidly under his head,

had lost his interest. "Well, the dog ran off to the hills, and neither the threats nor cajoleries of his master could ever make him enter the cabin again. The next day the man left the camp. What time is it? Getting on to sundown, ain't it? Keep off my leg, will you, you d—d Greaser, and stop stumbling round there! Lie down!"

But we knew that the Doctor had not completely finished his story, and we waited patiently for the conclusion. Meanwhile the old, gray silence of the woods again asserted itself, but shadows were now beginning to gather in the heavy beams of the roof above, and the dim aisles seemed to be narrowing and closing in around us. Presently the Doctor recommenced lazily, as if no interruption had occurred.

"As I said before, I never put much faith in that story, and should n't have told it, but for a rather curious experience of my own. It was in the spring of '62, and I was one of a party of four, coming up from O'Neill's, where we had been snowed up. It was awful weather; the snow had changed to sleet and rain after we crossed the divide, and the water was out everywhere; every ditch was a creek, every creek a river. We had lost two horses on the North Fork, we were dead beat, off the trail, and sloshing round, with night coming on, and the level hail like shot in our faces. Things were looking bleak and scary when, riding a little ahead of the party, I saw a light twinkling in a hollow beyond. My horse was still fresh, and, calling out to the boys to follow me and bear for the light, I struck out for it. In another moment I was before a little cabin that half burrowed in the black chaparral; I dismounted and rapped at the door. There was no response. I then tried to force the door, but it was fastened securely from within. I was all the more surprised when one of the boys, who had overtaken me, told me that he had just seen

through a window a man reading by the fire. Indignant at this inhospitality, we both made a resolute onset against the door, at the same time raising our angry voices to a yell. Suddenly there was a quick response, the hurried withdrawing of a bolt, and the door opened.

"The occupant was a short, thick-set man, with a pale, careworn face, whose prevailing expression was one of gentle good-humor and patient suffering. When we entered, he asked us hastily why we had not 'sung out' before.

"'But we *knocked!*' I said impatiently, 'and almost drove your door in.'

"'That 's nothing,' he said patiently. 'I 'm used to *that.*'

"I looked again at the man's patient, fateful face, and then around the cabin. In an instant the whole situation flashed before me. 'Are we not near Cave City?' I asked.

"'Yes,' he replied, 'it 's just below. You must have passed it in the storm.'

"'I see.' I again looked around the cabin. 'Is n't this what they call the haunted house?'

"He looked at me curiously. 'It is,' he said simply.

"You can imagine my delight! Here was an opportunity to test the whole story, to work down to the bedrock, and see how it would pan out! We were too many and too well armed to fear tricks or dangers from outsiders. If — as one theory had been held — the disturbance was kept up by a band of concealed marauders or road agents, whose purpose was to preserve their haunts from intrusion, we were quite able to pay them back in kind for any assault. I need not say that the boys were delighted with this prospect when the fact was revealed to them. The only one doubtful and apathetic spirit there was our host, who quietly resumed his seat and his book, with his old expression of patient martyrdom. It would have been easy for

me to have drawn him out, but I felt that I did not want to corroborate anybody else's experience; only to record my own. And I thought it better to keep the boys from any predisposing terrors.

"We ate our supper, and then sat, patiently and expectant, around the fire. An hour slipped away, but no disturbance; another hour passed as monotonously. Our host read his book; only the dash of hail against the roof broke the silence. But" —

The Doctor stopped. Since the last interruption, I noticed he had changed the easy slangy style of his story to a more perfect, artistic, and even studied manner. He dropped now suddenly into his old colloquial speech, and quietly said, "If you don't quit stumbling over those riatas, Juan, I'll hobble *you*. Come here; there, lie down, will you?"

We all turned fiercely on the cause of this second dangerous interruption, but a sight of the poor fellow's pale and frightened face withheld our vindictive tongues. And the Doctor, happily, of his own accord, went on: —

"But I had forgotten that it was no easy matter to keep these high-spirited boys, bent on a row, in decent subjection; and after the third hour passed without a supernatural exhibition, I observed, from certain winks and whispers, that they were determined to get up indications of their own. In a few moments violent rappings were heard from all parts of the cabin; large stones (adroitly thrown up the chimney) fell with a heavy thud on the roof. Strange groans and ominous yells seemed to come from the outside (where the interstices between the logs were wide enough). Yet, through all this uproar, our host sat still and patient, with no sign of indignation or reproach upon his good-humored but haggard features. Before long it became evident that this exhibition was exclusively for *his* benefit. Under the thin disguise of asking him to assist them in discovering

the disturbers *outside* the cabin, those inside took advantage of his absence to turn the cabin topsy-turvy.

"'You see what the spirits have done, old man,' said the arch leader of this mischief. 'They 've upset that there flour barrel while we was n't looking, and then kicked over the water-jug and spilled all the water!'

"The patient man lifted his head and looked at the flour-strewn walls. Then he glanced down at the floor, but drew back with a slight tremor.

"'It ain't water!' he said quietly.

"'What is it, then?'

"'It 's BLOOD! Look!'

"The nearest man gave a sudden start and sank back white as a sheet.

"For there, gentlemen, on the floor, just before the door, where the old man had seen the dog hesitate and lift his feet, there! there! — gentlemen — upon my honor, slowly widened and broadened a dark red pool of human blood! Stop him! Quick! Stop him, I say!"

There was a blinding flash that lit up the dark woods, and a sharp report! When we reached the Doctor's side he was holding the smoking pistol, just discharged, in one hand, while with the other he was pointing to the rapidly disappearing figure of Juan, our Mexican vaquero!

"Missed him! by G—d!" said the Doctor. "But did you hear him? Did you see his livid face as he rose up at the name of blood? Did you see his guilty conscience in his face? Eh? Why don't you speak? What are you staring at?"

"Was it the murdered man's ghost, Doctor?" we all panted in one quick breath.

"Ghost be d—d! No! But in that Mexican vaquero — that cursed Juan Ramirez! — I saw and shot at his murderer!"